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The acculturation process of Malaysian Chinese immigrants to U.S.A

Benghoe Tan
San Jose State University

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**THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE
IMMIGRANTS TO U. S. A.**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Division of
Teacher Education (Secondary Education)
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Benghoe Tan

May 1996

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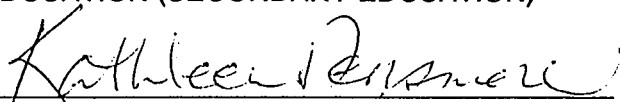
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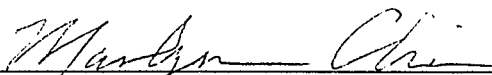
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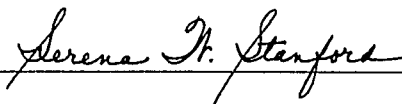
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Dr. Marilyn Chi

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ji-Mei Chang", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Ji-Mei Chang

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Serena H. Stanford", written over a horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE IMMIGRANTS TO U. S. A.

by Benghoe Tan

This study explores the experiences of eight Malaysian Chinese immigrants' efforts at adjustment and acculturation in American culture/society. It considers the impact of the American society on their educational and cultural values, their attitudes toward gender preference and the model minority label. Their coping strategies are also discussed.

Despite the differences in cultures, all the respondents appear to have adjusted successfully to their new environment. The adolescents excel in schools. They attribute this to a combination of their cultural traits and the compatibility of American educational system to their needs. The respondents' attitude against gender preference appears to have been strengthened by the American institutional anti-discrimination measures and the more enlightened attitudes of the American public. The respondents are unaware of the implications of the model minority label. It is not significant to most of the respondents personally, whether in schools, work places or in the general society.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement	4
Research Questions	5
Significance of the Study	6
Assumptions	8
Limitations of the Study	9
Summary	10
 II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	 11
Background	11
Chinese Culture and its Impact on Education	13
Historical Impact on Chinese Identity	24
Cultural Adjustments	30
Chinese and American Culture Compared	49
Generational Conflicts	57
Gender Issues	61
The Model Minority	69
Summary	97
 III. METHODOLOGY	 98
Research Perspective	98
Sampling	99
Data Collection	105
Procedure	105
Data Analysis and Discussion	115
 IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION	 117
Research Question 1.	
Interactions of two different systems of education	117
Purpose of Education	118
U.S. and Malaysian Education Systems Compared ...	119
Problems and Coping Strategies in Schools	139
Summary	145

Research Question 2.	
Cultural differences between Chinese and Americans	146
U.S. and Malaysian Chinese Cultures Compared	147
Impact of American Culture on Respondents	163
Problems and Coping Strategies	170
Summary	180
Research Question 3.	
Attitudes towards Gender Issues	183
State of Gender Preference in Malaysia	184
Respondents' Attitudes toward Gender Preference	190
Gender Preference in U.S. and Malaysia Compared ..	192
Summary	195
Research Question 4.	
Model Minority Label	196
Impact of the Model Minority Label	196
Reasons for the Success/Failure of Chinese	
Students	199
Summary	202
V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	203
Research Question 1	203
Research Question 2	205
Research Question 3	208
Research Question 4	210
Other Findings	211
Reflections	213
Overall Conclusion	214
VI. RECOMMENDATIONS	215
Educational Implications	215
For Further Studies	216
BIBLIOGRAPHY	218

APPENDIX **230**

Data From Interviews	230
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CASE 1

Part I. The Student (Elwin)	230
Background	230
Attitudes towards Education	234
Gender Issues	247
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	248
Model Minority	258
The Future	260
Summary	261

Part II. The Mother (Mrs. K)	262
Background	262
Attitude Towards Education	277
Gender Issues	290
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	295
Model Minority	310
The Future	312
Summary	315

Part III. The Father (Mr. K)	317
Background	317
Attitude Towards Education	334
Gender Issues	347
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	351
Model Minority	367
The Future	371
Summary	374

CASE 2

Part I. The Student (Wern)	375
Background	375
Attitude towards Education	379
Gender Issues	388
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	389
Model Minority	397
The Future	399
Summary	401
 Part II. The Mother (Mrs. T)	 402
Background	402
Attitude Towards Education	415
Gender Issues	429
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	435
Model Minority	448
The Future	457
Summary	455

CASE 3

Part I. The Student (Chee)	456
Background	456
Attitude towards Education	458
Gender Issues	462
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	463
Model Minority	468
The Future	471
Summary	472

Part II. The Mother (Mrs. L)	473
Background	473
Attitude Towards Education	479
Gender Issues	486
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	489
Model Minority	494
The Future	494
Summary	495
 Part III. The Father (Mr. L)	 496
Background	496
Attitude Towards Education	502
Gender Issues	511
Adjustments to American Society/Culture	514
Model Minority	522
The Future	522
Summary	524

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The demographics of America in general, and California in particular, have been undergoing periodic changes ever since the founding of the nation. Immigrant influx is of particular interest to the demographic mosaic of California after the 1960s, with the lifting of quotas on Asian immigration in general and of Chinese immigrants in particular. Consequently, a large percentage of immigrants entering America are from distinctly different racial/ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds as compared to earlier ones that were predominantly European. Hence, Asian immigrants constitute one of the fastest and largest percentages of recent immigrants to join others already here pursuing the "American Dream." While earlier European immigrants may distinguish each other from the different regions of Europe, recent immigrants from other continents encouraged their being perceived as a common racial group. Asian immigrants, particularly the Chinese, have prominent differences in terms of their culture, language, values, beliefs, physical characteristics and generally, the way of life, from the mainstream Americans. With these prominent differences in the ways of life of recent immigrants, long-stabilized Americans are of two minds as to whether they should accommodate more recently arrived groups and, if so, how and to what extent.

Every new immigrant to this country has a unique history and special experiences. The heterogeneous nature of Chinese immigrants has been largely ignored. They have many countries of embarkation with political systems ranging from Communism to military dictatorships to various forms of

democracy. They vary in their social and cultural backgrounds which include education systems, levels of education attained, languages, experiences in multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-linguistic settings to those of a homogeneous setting and different socio-economic statuses.

Chinese immigrants, like other immigrants, have in the past and still are at present contributing in their own way toward transforming America into the exciting, unique, vibrant, and pluralistic society which no other country in the world has ever witnessed. America has been well regarded by the rest of the world as a land of the free, of hope and promise, of milk and honey, of human respect and dignity and the leading light of this world. On the other hand, could a pluralistic society comprised of an already established mainstream European population, coupled with the new experience of dealing with recent non-European immigrants, become so bigoted, racist, intolerable, and insular that the society could be easily turned into a 'killing field' by anarchists, xenophobics, facists and opportunists?

Educational institutions are not spared unprecedented cultural transformations, be they at the preschool or college levels. A review of the national Census, school district and college students statistics in the whole country, and in particular California, reveals the reality of the situation. The implications of this rapid transformation have already been shown to have evoked controversies in problematic areas such as the provision of bilingual education, affirmative action in employment, student enrollment in schools and colleges, bussing, student racial conflicts, and general discontentment among certain groups of people.

While the immigrant population continues to increase with a corresponding movement of very diverse students into our schools, there are no dramatic increases in the diversity of teachers, school administrators nor curricular reforms taking into account the varied cultural experiences of students. In fact, there is a widening gap between teacher diversity and student diversity, especially in the relationship between Asian students and non-Asian teachers. Trueba (1989) observed that the American educational system has neglected a large number of minority students or has remained anachronistically segregated and insensitive to their cultural differences and value orientations. The vastly different cultures that the immigrants bring, in many instances, are not congruent with the existing American culture, and hence a stage is set for the potential emergence of tensions and conflicts, intolerance and misunderstandings, prejudice and discrimination, negotiations and accommodations, acceptance and resolution and, at times, the affirmation of such divergences.

Will the process of acculturation be made easier with the implementation of a multi-cultural curriculum, diversity program, or bilingual education in conjunction with the recruitment of ethnically diverse administrators, teachers and teacher aides to act as role models and facilitators for the learning process of these culturally different students? How will the need for primary language education be regarded--as a problem, a right or a resource? Limited past educational experiences or the lack of such experiences in interacting with recent immigrants make the process of teaching and learning more complicated and challenging to both teachers and students alike.

As previously stated, Chinese immigrants constitute one of the fastest growing group of recent immigrants to the United States of America further helping to boost the multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial nature of the population in this nation. In what ways then, have the recent Chinese immigrant students, in their struggle and effort to adjust to a new environment, contributed to and been impacted by existing cultural and educational establishments? How do they cope with the culturally divergent approaches or a single European-based approach to education and the philosophical beliefs underlying education? How do parents react to the ways schools are managed and administered? How do the parents and students react to their new roles while conforming with the prevailing culture? How do their efforts and the consequences of adjustments in the milieu outside of school impact the students' behaviors in schools? To what extent are their dreams for a better life compatible with the American Dream? How do they see their future in this newly adopted country?

Problem Statement

Chinese students in general, and recent immigrants in particular, are faced with multiple social and cultural norms that may be totally different from those they were accustomed to in their former countries. School environment, system of education, curriculum, non-Chinese ESL teachers and non-Chinese peers, classroom instructional and management systems, as well as stereotypical views of Chinese and the general way of life in the United States of America are all important areas where differences exist. In light of these new

experiences, what are their perceptions of the different social and cultural life in America? What attempts have they made adapting to American society to create a conducive social, cultural and educational experience for themselves? In what way, if any, does socioeconomic standing influence the Chinese immigrants' perspectives toward acculturation in the United States of America? To what extent do generational and gender factors explain differences in perceptions toward the immigrants' worldviews and acculturation in America? How do recent Chinese immigrants react to the "model minority" label? What coping strategies do they use to overcome or at least ameliorate the adverse situations they constantly face in this new country? What are their hopes and aspirations that they foresee this new country will be able to fulfil for them that their former country of birth could not?

Research Questions

1. Given the traditional and centuries-long attitude of great reverence for scholarship and learning in Chinese society and culture, what impact does the existing American system of education have on the Chinese immigrants? How do Malaysians brought up in both Malaysia and the United States interact with each other, especially in relation to the educational process? To what extent do they complement and reinforce each others strengths? Are there changes in traditional Chinese values of scholarship and learning?

2. Considering the differences between eastern and western cultures, what coping strategies do Chinese immigrants use to negotiate a tolerable, if not enriching experience, for themselves in the home, school and society?
3. Given the traditional preference for the male over female gender by the Chinese as manifested in many forms of gender discrimination, what adjustments concerning gender do new immigrants make?
4. What is the impact of the "model minority" label on recent Chinese immigrant students in relation to their academic progress, gender and socio-economic status? How do Chinese students response to this label? What are their coping strategies?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of Chinese parents and students toward education in relation to those of mainstream Americans that may impact the educational outcomes for Chinese students. Values about education among Chinese immigrants and mainstream Americans will be compared and contrasted, especially as they pertain to acculturation, accommodation, assimilation, integration and educational attainment of recent Chinese immigrants in this society. The potential role of traditional Chinese values toward education, such as the close monitoring of their children's education, an emphasis on diligence and perseverance, and students' sense of filial piety in their new setting, will be explored.

The experiences of the research participants will help enlighten other recent Chinese immigrants so they can take proven actions to alleviate similar difficulties and uncertainties encountered in adjusting to a new cultural environment. It may even help trigger untried ideas for coping with challenging problems. The study will also reveal survival, coping and accommodation strategies used by some Chinese students to negotiate a tolerable environment for themselves in and out of school. This study will reveal some of the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, values and beliefs of Chinese on educational matters and culture.

The contributions made by the research participants will provide information on the worldviews of some immigrant Chinese parents and students which may contain implications for educational decision-making, such as preservice preparation and inservice training of teachers on cultural diversity and community participation in education. This study will provide valuable information about and insights into the Chinese community in particular. Understanding may be gainfully used in the incorporation of plans and programs to elicit greater community participation in education of the Chinese. The particular needs of the Chinese students highlighted may be used for consideration in envisioning the future direction of education in terms of curriculum, teaching strategies, cultural sensitivity and diversity in personnel at all levels of administration and management. At the same time, if there is a lack of participation by the Chinese community in school activities, local education authorities will be in a position of understanding the underlying reasons for low participation.

The extent to which intergenerational differences between Chinese parents and their adolescent children, compounded by a new cultural environment, may cause cleavages between the parties concerned, and this phenomenon will be explored. Resultant coping strategies employed to overcome such tensions will be shared with other Chinese immigrants.

The study will also indicate any changes in the attitudes of Chinese parents toward the female gender as they pertain to parental investment in their education in the United States of America. For example, the traditional belief that the male is the dominant figure in the family, the inheritor of the "family tree" where the ancestral lineage is passed down only through the male and the attitude that once a daughter is married, she is married out and belongs to the "other" family, will be explored.

To what extent are new immigrants aware of the "model minority" label and what are their reactions to this label? The attitudes of some Chinese parents and students towards this label of the Chinese as one of the "model minorities" in education and its implications will be examined.

Last, it is hoped this study may stimulate further research into the plight of Chinese immigrants to America, highlighting the heterogeneous nature of the Chinese population in terms of their socio-economic background, country of origin, length of residence, past political experiences and educational differences.

Assumptions

The general characteristics of Chinese culture, philosophy and value systems regarding family cohesion and hierarchy, system of respect, and

attitudes toward education are assumed to be somewhat similar regardless of an immigrant's country of departure, be it mainland China, (Hong Kong), Taiwan, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, the Philippines or any part of the world, to the United States of America.

Any specific experiences other than those generalizable to the Chinese as a whole will be confined solely to the experiences of the Malaysian participants selected for this study. Hence, unique experiences, especially those relevant to the historical, political and social forces pertaining to Malaysia, shall be valid to only that country and the participants.

Limitations of the Study

The research focus is limited to participants from Malaysia. Their past experiences, as shaped by historical, socio-economic and political forces portrayed, will be relevant only to the Malaysian Chinese. The findings are not meant to generalize to all Chinese, foreign or American-born and thus precludes the worldviews the latter.

As this research is confined to the experiences of the Malaysian participants only, data from teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) or regular classroom teachers for cross referencing the interactions and attempts at adjustment of the student participants to different cultural settings, different teaching strategies, and coping techniques of the students, and their language acquisition problems that may impact their educational achievement, are not captured.

Summary

Historically, Chinese have been migrating to all parts of the world like a diaspora from China. How are they adjusting and surviving in their new countries of adoption? It is inevitable that successful and effective coping strategies have been used by the Chinese as survival mechanisms to accommodate to the different historical developments in social, economic and political spheres. To what extent have Chinese immigrants been impacted by their new culture? How do students fare in their new educational system? What changes have they experienced in regard to their perceptions of gender discrimination? How do they react to the "model minority" label? Not much has been written about their story, either in America or other parts of the world. Hence, this is a modest attempt at relating the story of Chinese immigrants to the United States of America.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Background

It has been well documented by many writers that the mass arrival of the Chinese in America dates back to the days of the gold rush and the western railroad around the eighteen eighties, although Takaki (1993) has mentioned that Asian Americans (presumably inclusive of Chinese) have been here for over one hundred and fifty years, before many European immigrant groups. Although there were some Chinese immigrants coming into the United States in the eighties, the United States was generally described (Hodgkinson, 1993) as a nation of Europeans between 1820-1945. He anticipated between now and the year 2,000, immigrants from non-European countries will increase tremendously such that by the year 1995, 52.0% of all high school graduates will be minorities. According to estimates cited by Takaki (1993), currently one-third of the American people do not trace their origins to Europe. In California, minorities are fast becoming the majority, and by 2056 most Americans will trace their descent to Africa, Asia, the Hispanic world, the Pacific Islands, or the Middle East--almost anywhere but white Europe. Wollenberg (1989) describes a similar changing demographic characteristic. Portes and Zhou (1993), in quoting Passel and Edmonton (1992), stated that in 1990 the foreign-born population of the United States reached an estimated 21.2 million, which is the highest number in United States history. Throughout the history of immigration

to America, Chinese have experienced many vicissitudes of life and have, at different times, been called the diligent and peaceful Chinese who have contributed to the development of the country, and at other, vilified as the "pagan," the "yellow peril," "hatchet man," "slave wages," "coolie" labor and the cause of American economic ills during times of economic hardships or depression. It has been mentioned in Outlook (1989) that each Asian group has been subjected to discrimination depending on the fluctuation of growth and decline of the economy. They have been looked upon as worse than the dogs that the Euro-Americans kept. They have suffered murder, humiliation, discrimination, indignity, exploitation as "yellow slaves," the ignominious Chinese Exclusion Act, violations of their basic human rights but, at the other extreme, extolled as the "model minority."

All these have been discussed and documented by many writers (Chan, 1991; Hsu, 1971; Hu, A. 1989; Liu & Yu, 1975; Siu, 1993; Steingasser et al., 1986; Takaki, 1989,1993; Tsai, 1986; Yao, E. 1983) who relate that Asian Americans and other minorities can be studied from four perspectives. First, they are labelled as deviants and deficient and in order to become "normal" they must shed their "dysfunctional" cultures in order to assimilate into the majority Anglo-American culture. Second, the contributions of various minority groups have been accepted as assets but the question of equal treatment has not been addressed. Third, minorities as the exploited group in America. Last, treating the minority immigrants who came here voluntarily even though opportunities available may be limited by conditions beyond their control. Besides these, the Chinese have also been portrayed as "heathen," "unassimilable" and incompatible with the "American character."

Wang (1991) has chosen to describe significant Chinese migration to America in three periods, starting in 1850-1882, then 1882-1965 and finally from 1965 to the present. According to the 1990 Census projection, the Chinese population stands at 1.3 to 1.5 million, or 0.5% of the total American population. Wang (1991) has stated that, although in terms of numbers the Chinese population is small and politically negligible, when compared with other racial groups it has seen a phenomenal increase since 1963 (237,292) and had a profound influence on American science and philosophy in recent decades. In terms of educational and economic achievements, Asian populations have been labelled, albeit controversially as as "the model minority," especially with their achievements in the fields of science, mathematics and family income. After World War II, the Chinese have been considered by some as achieving "total assimilation" as measured by indicators such as educational achievement, occupational status and income. What then are some of the contributing factors that bring about the "fantastic" achievement of this small "model minority?" Is the label a fair reflection of the Chinese population as a whole? What ramifications does this label have on the Chinese? The following discussion and the subsequent sections on the "model minority" will reveal an extremely complicated set of interacting factors that include culture, politics, identity and values.

Chinese Culture and Its Impact on Education

To understand the attitude of the Chinese toward life, and specifically the pursuit of scholarship and education, one has to delve into historical and

cultural forces dating back 3,000 years which have shaped the outlook of Chinese in all parts of the world.

Culture can be defined in various ways, depending on the context and the emphasis one chooses. In discussing the definitions of culture, Lustig and Koester (1993) state that culture can be defined from aspects such as: first, a descriptive aspect which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society; second, culture as the social heredity of a group of people concerned with ideas, practices and experiences; third, culture as the beliefs, values, and norms that exist to guide people's behaviors in solving common problems; and fourth, culture as an historically transmitted system of symbols, meanings and norms.

Cultural Values

Chinese culture emphasizes many important values which were passed down to the individual through the strong influence of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Following Edward Hall's taxonomy of culture (Lustig & Koester 1993), Chinese culture is characterized as a high-context culture in which the meanings of messages are either implied by the physical setting or presumed to be part of the individual's internalized beliefs, values, and norms. This means that the commitment between people is very strong and deep, and responsibility to others takes precedence over responsibility to oneself. Loyalties to families and members of one's social and work groups are long-lasting and unchanging. This has very wide implications for the Chinese, as it can be found

that a Chinese, in fulfilling his/her value of filial piety, has to be obedient to the parents. This is, in turn, translated into the relentless effort expended by Chinese students to achieve the highest possible education so as to do justice to what their parents expect and want them to do. Among the findings to link East Asian students academic success to cultural factors, Schneider and Lee (1990) found that most East Asian students' were well aware of their parents' expectations for high grades and that they studied hard to please their parents. It is one of the most common expressions of filial piety and an exhibition of love for their parents. This is a reciprocal responsibility--the parents sacrifice and care for their children who, in turn, obey their parents. This conforms with the Confucian ethics of obedience to elders and authority. Clayre (1988) asserted that ". . . human relationships were to be regulated by codes of honor, moral conduct, respectful behavior and courtesy." Asiaweek (1994) characterizes the ". . . Confucian precepts as self-discipline, social harmony, strong families and a reverence for education." Confucianism has become an integral part of the lives of the Chinese, and Smith (1992), considers that for a person to understand the Chinese family, he must understand Confucianism.

The hierarchical nature of authority among the Chinese family system permits the transference of authority from the father to the mother to uncles and aunts or other relatives, and subsequently to teachers. The nature of this hierarchical authority is based on the Confucian tradition of five paramount principles of relationships. These include that of the national leader and subject; father and son; elder brother and younger brother; husband and wife; and friend and friend. Smith (1992) includes another human relationship, that of the teacher-student. Under this form of social relationships, every party

understands the correctness and appropriateness of certain behaviors in certain situations. Quoting Mencius, a famous Chinese philosopher and follower of Confucius, Smith (1992:10) lays out one basis of the Chinese cultural outlook: "The root of the empire is the state, the root of the state is the family, the root of the family is the individual." It is no wonder that Chinese students are conditioned to respect teachers and are generally not behavioral problem. This statement was supported by the observations of Chen and Uttal (1988), Bean Sprouts (1980) and Hsu (1972), that Chinese parents and other family members, as well as the community assume the primary responsibility for teaching and disciplining children. Therefore, a child's achievement reflects the effort of the entire family or community. It is often said that if one does not make it academically, one is a disgrace to the family (Lee, 1979). This socially oriented component in the concept of achievement motivation is absent in American counterparts.

Authority entrusted to people and institutions is a vital component to the Chinese concept of discipline and order in society. If this aspect of Chinese culture is transposed to the power distance dimension of Geert Hofstede's taxonomy (Lustig & Koester, 1993), it means that Chinese culture prefers institutional power over individual power and the collectivist culture which emphasizes reliance on group allegiance over individual self-allegiance. Hsu (1971) calls this inclusiveness (that is, the tendency to expand kinship-like relationships) and continuity (relative permanence of Chinese friendship in comparison with friendship among white American). Chen and Uttal (1988) relate that Chinese philosophy traditionally has emphasized the malleability of the individual and the importance of the environment in shaping the expression

of human potential. It is this belief in the malleability of human character that shapes the philosophy of the Chinese that hard work and diligence lead to success. This is succinctly borne out by the research of Stevenson, Lee et al. (1990) which compares, among other variables, the general factors underlying achievement. They found the Chinese emphasized effort and ability, in contrast to the American belief in human ability alone. Confucian doctrine dictates that one has to cultivate oneself, then regulate your family, govern the state and order the kingdom well. This is eloquently supported by the fact that the family was fundamental to social order and that no amount of regulation can take the family's place or perform its function as the linchpin of a well-ordered society (Asiaweek, October, 1994). Hsu (1971) asserts that an individual is part of and must serve the larger whole, as opposed to the fierce and rugged individualism of American culture. These beliefs still persist today, and Chinese students are taught that study and high educational achievement is an important form of self-improvement.

Hirshman and Wong (1983) surmised that collective rather than individual action and respect for authority may contribute to educational success. Graham (1981), in his survey of multi-ethnic students at the Brigham Young University in Hawaii, found out that overall the Chinese students perceived themselves as coming from strong traditional families where elders and ancestors are viewed with great reverence, emphasized obtaining good education, obeyed parents and gave the family a good name. Educational achievement was consistently valued above other types of achievements, and this was reflected in the highest mean GPA obtained by Chinese students on that campus. Schneider and Lee (1990: 347) also found that "although East

accomplishments are achieved at certain costs," like less opportunity to develop social skills because they spend a great proportion of their time in academic pursuit at the expense of social interactions with friends.

A second fundamental value in Chinese culture is the respect and pursuit of education. This has more than a 2,500 year-old history where scholars had been revered, having the most respectable and honorable careers to pursue in traditional Chinese society. This belief remains very influential to this day. In traditional society, every man dreamt of attaining high status, influence and wealth by passing the gruelling Imperial examination. Hence, education was a tool for social and economic mobility. This is easily encapsulated in the saying of Confucius, "By nature men are pretty much alike; it is learning and practice that set them apart." In America too, the early Chinese immigrant believed that education was the key to employment opportunities, and meant freedom from the plantation and the drudgery of low-paying, unskilled jobs that their forefathers had endured. To them, education appeared to promise opportunities for the second generation, with their children entering a world of words and ideas (Takaki, 1989). This is generally true of all developing economies in the Third World. Examination still remains the primary path of upward mobility in contemporary China (Chen & Uttal, 1988). Furthermore, it is also a means of attaining the code of a Confucian gentleman. This means that one is of good moral character, respects his father and ruler, is able to think for himself as guided by definite rules of conduct, studies constantly and practices self-examination (Sivin, 1988). This traditional emphasis on education, still held tenaciously today, has led Bloodsworth (1980) to characterized the passion for education as "in the blood of the Chinese." DeGlopper (1988)

passion for education as "in the blood of the Chinese." DeGlopper (1988) acknowledges there is a great appreciation for education, individual achievement and social mobility among the Chinese. Asiaweek (October, 1994) commented that "the ingrained respect for knowledge and for the teachers who impart it is the key factor in the outstanding academic performance of East Asians on a global basis."

A third fundamental value in Chinese culture is the concept of sacrifice, which entails the postponement of present gratification for future comforts. This embodies the widely quoted saying that one should "taste the bitter first, then only the sweet." It prompts Bloodworth (1980) to observe this phenomenon of familial sacrifice in Singapore that no matter how poor a Chinese widow may be, she will save every penny to send her children to the university. Lee (1979) found that parents in Asia would not mind enduring all forms of sacrifices to push their children through the highest levels of education attainable. In America too, this sentiment has been recorded by Guthrie (1985) and Siu (1993), who found that parents vowed to work as hard as they could to help their children in any way, because obtaining a degree and training mean a lot in the job market. What better exemplification than the reply given by an elderly lady who, when asked why was there a need for her to study English, gave the reasons as she wanted to help her adult children succeed and to communicate with her grandchildren (Weinstein-shr & Lewis, 1989). Emphasis on self-help and reliance on community benevolence rather than federal relief agencies is also noted by Tsai (1986), who found that even in the depth of the depression era, most Chinese did not want to accept the government dole, due to their self-pride and the stigma of indignity attached to being on welfare.

A fourth value is diligence. To some Chinese, ability is an accumulation of skills and knowledge. Chen and Uttal (1988) in quoting Tong et al. (1985) present a favorite student adage which says, "Genius comes from hard work and knowledge depends on accumulation." According to the Chinese perspective, innate ability may determine the rate at which one acquires new knowledge, but the ultimate level of achievement is attained through effort. This was also found by Schneider and Lee (1990) as one of the reasons for East Asian students' success: their diligence and other personal attributes like being quiet, organized and respectful. Furthermore, Chen and Uttal (1988) describe how traditional and modern Chinese cultural values regarding educational achievements are reflected in the beliefs of parents and children. Parents setting of higher standards and working more often with their children on homework than their American counterparts help ensure that Chinese students work diligently. Research by Mizokawa and Ryckman (1990) attributed the academic success of Asian Americans to the amount of their efforts rather than ability. This was also supported by the research study of Stevenson, Lee et al. (1993) in comparing the expectations between Chinese, Japanese and Americans and Asian academic success as due to effort rather than ability.

Explanations for Academic Success

Some of the possible explanations for academic success of Asians in general, and of the Chinese in particular, have been referred to above, like diligence, filial piety, family support, sacrifice, discipline and on ingrained

reverence for education. Other researchers provide confirmation of the explanations below.

The importance of cultural factors have been alluded to by DiMaggio (1982) when he states that it takes more than measured ability to do well in school. He asserts that cultural capital is also important for educational success. Schneider and Lee (1990), in their review of literature on the success of East Asians students, refer to some explanations of academic success: first, students' cognitive abilities due to controversial genetics reasons; second, home environment and the cultural deprivation theory plus cultural compatibility or cultural similarity; third, socializing influences of society and Ogbu's explanation of voluntary and involuntary immigrant status; and last, verbal and nonverbal communication styles between teachers and students. Schneider and Lee (1990), in their research of 46 East Asians comprising Korean, Chinese and Japanese Americans and 49 Anglo students, found that academic success is more likely to be the result of a relationship between sociocultural factors and interpersonal interactions. They found that in the two sampled schools, East Asian students' academic performance on achievement tests and report card grades was higher than that of the Anglo students. They went on to show, from the feedback of students, parents, teachers and researcher observations, that two levels of social interaction which appear to support academic achievement are the formation of academic self-expectations of the students and the actualization of these expectations at home and in the classroom for the East Asian students. This is explained through the East Asian cultural tradition which places a high value on education as a means of self-improvement, self-esteem and family honor, and also to overcome occupational

discrimination by investing in education. Hence, they stated that the study indicates East Asian academic success is related to cultural and socioeconomic characteristics and the interactive relationships among children, parents, teachers and peer groups in terms of their expectations.

How do the Chinese students perceive their identity may also influence their concern towards academic achievement. Liu and Yu (1975), basing their research on the experience of East Coast Jews hypothesized that the weakening of the Chinese identity in latter generations may cause educational achievement to be lowered. It was noted by Lee (1979) that second generation Asian Americans, born and raised in this country, do not outperform other American students in mathematics. Hsu (1971:33) observed that "the American environment in which the ideal is for children to be independent of their parents as soon as they can and where parental authority and kinship ties have negative rather than praiseworthy connotations, we should not be surprised if more Chinese depart from their ancestral ways." Continuing, he said that the American cultural context is characterized by resistance to authority, discontinuity between the generations and exclusiveness of the parent-children unit. The sojourner community believe that to invest in liquid capital that can be easily moved in times of necessity, in the form of a good education is wise investment (Hirshman & Wong, 1983). Are the Chinese immigrants all sojourners? It may be true of some according to Takaki (1989), but historical data indicate that between 1895-1919, 55.0% of Englishmen, 42.0% of the Irish, 40.0% of Poles and 50.0% of Italians returned to their homelands. He continued to state that the view of Asian immigrant as "sojourners" and

European immigrants as "settlers" is both a mistaken notion and a widely held myth.

Hirshman and Wong (1983) have suggested that cultural values defining achievement through ambition, persistence, deferred gratification and social mobility play a part in academic achievement. Additionally, they consider it the immigrant status that inspires an intense commitment toward achievement in the new setting and the coping strategy of combating discrimination and prejudice that leads to a high level of motivation to be "twice as good" as the Americans in order to succeed. They suggest that immigration and immigration policies may have a major impact in the educational success. This general attitude of striving for better results is also noted by Guthrie (1985) in her interview with a parent, whose advice to his children is that, "If you want to be as good as Caucasians, you have to be twice as good; if you want to be better, you have to be three times as good."

Vernon (1982), in seeking explanations for Asian abilities and achievement in education, and after finding no conclusive evidence of genetic superiority, cites the family upbringing and values as possible mediators of this phenomenon. He quotes warmth and security in preschool years, firm control of behavior from about three years, no permissiveness, cohesion within family, kin and family ancestors, adherence to accepted conventions of social behavior, emphasis of obligations to others, loyalty and obedience to authorities as relevant factors. Lending support on the importance of family kinship, Barrozo (1987) noted that the tribute of the Asian students' success should go to the parents for their support and to their culture which impresses on the young the attitudes, habits and motivational level that lead to achievement. Examples of

these traits are discipline, closely-knit families, hard work, sacrifice, steeled determination, and love for learning.

Historical Impact on Chinese Identity

The history of Chinese migration into the United States of America can be divided into different periods of time since 1850 (Wang, 1991). Different waves of immigration brought different characteristics Chinese. The first wave composed mostly of laborers coming to work in the gold mines and on the building of the railway. They had little education and were illiterate in English. The second wave, 1882-1965, was a period of infamy for the Chinese when the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was passed. It was racist and discriminatory and included laws on anti-miscegenation, proscription of family reunion, and prohibition of land and business ownership. Chinese were segregated socially and disenfranchised politically. This period saw the cessation of Chinese immigration into USA. The third wave, from 1965 to the present, saw the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. With naturalization and spousal reunions, the Chinese population began to increase. This period also saw the flow of educational, professional and commercial people into the USA, together with large number of qualified Chinese students from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China and South-east Asia. This period is what Chan (1991) regards as the coming of a bimodal contemporary Chinese immigrant, with about one-third being professionals and the rest the working class.

The different 'batches' of Chinese immigrating into the United States of America, molded the Chinese conception of identity differently from each other.

Not only did the time period influence the nature of the Chinese identity but also the historical experiences of the Chinese from different parts of the world with different political, social and economic experiences. Consequently, it is predictable that with the different conceptions of Chinese identity, the extent, intensity and effort expended toward acculturation into this society would vary. Wang (1991) has classified Chinese into five categories. These identities are constantly undergoing transformation depending on the race relations in America, public policy towards the Chinese, the state of American diplomatic relations with China and China's policies toward overseas Chinese. At the personal level, the perception of oneself as a geographical entity, a nation, a government or a culture is decisive to the concept of what it means to be Chinese besides mere racial characteristics. The question of identity shapes the destiny of the overseas Chinese.

First, the Chinese were perceived and treated as "aliens," "heathen" and "nonassimilable." As such, they were harshly discriminated against and, in many cases, denied basic human rights. Most Chinese tolerated the discrimination and abuse because they considered them temporary. Immigrant Chinese are tied to their cultural roots in China, and this remains the basis upon which many have structured their existence and identity. This identity also pertains to those early Chinese in Malaysia who were born in China. It is this group, according to Tsai (1986), that suffered the most from the persistent inequality, racial conflict, alienation and subordination in America.

The second consists of the total assimilation of American identity, connected mostly with the American-born generation. This group identity has succumbed to the intense influence of the "superior" White culture, environment

and education and formed value judgements deprecating Chinese heritage. These Chinese often become obsessed with acceptance by White society, developing self-hatred and other forms of self-deprecating actions like Anglicizing their names, dissociating themselves from their Chinese relatives, joining Christian churches, and the social and recreational activities of White peers. Despite their denunciations of Chinese heritage and culture, they are not accepted by White society and are subjected to many forms of discrimination like the "glass ceiling." This phenomenon is attested to by Bill Wong (Asian Week, 1994), who states some Asian Americans have expressed self-hatred which, to him, seems to be a rite of passage in America. Asian Americans are made to feel ashamed of who they are by institutional and individualized racism. It is inevitable that as long as racial discrimination and hatred are meted out to the Chinese based on their physical characteristics, every Chinese, whether fresh off the boat or American-born, will suffer the same fate. The experiences of American-born Amy Wu is a case in point. She was subjected to security check at the airport while her Caucasian friend was left "unmolested". She was told by a roommate to go back to her country, and an ignorant yet racist cabbie made unwarranted and inappropriate comments to her (Asian Week, Feb. 3, 1995). The feeling of a kind of alienation was also felt by the Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley (Newsweek, October 31, 1994: 19), when he stated, "Yet no matter the scope of my accomplishments, when many Americans see my face and hear my Chinese accent, they think of me as an immigrant, first and foremost. In the eyes of many, that has come to mean a drain on public services, a competitor for jobs and a threat to a cohesive society." Tsai (1986) described this group of American-born Chinese as

constantly facing conflicting values and various assimilation problems. They generally led a dual life and bore feelings of ambivalence--a mixture of expectations, struggle, confusion and anger. It is this group that suffers in a varying degrees from an identity crisis where their improved social and economic conditions, and to a certain degree acculturation, do not bring them the acceptance that they expected by American mainstream society. They are the group of culturally perplexed and psychologically troubled Chinese.

The third identity is accommodation. These immigrants maintain their Chinese identification, lead Chinese way of life and plan to return to China before they die. Essentially a survival strategy, this identity varies depending on the transformation of American society and the political relations between the United States of American and China.

The fourth identity consists of ethnic pride. This identity emerged in the late 60s and early 70s to develop a distinct Chinese-American identity. The objective is to reconceptualize Chinese American identity and demand a rightful place in this country for all Chinese Americans, based on the Black Civil Right Movement.

The last identity is the "uprooted" which represents a large concentration of highly educated Chinese immigrants from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. They represent the educated elite of these countries who may come here initially as students and elect to stay on. This category, for example, An Wang, constitutes the "brain drain" from these countries. Takaki (1989) describes these immigrants as the second wave of Chinese newcomers made up mainly of the professional class and the educated elite from the urban areas. These second-wave immigrants are mostly from China and Taiwan, and mainly

Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking. Their target work place is in the high technology and service economy rather than in agricultural. To them America is not a temporary work place. They do not consider themselves sojourners, but but look at the United States as a new home where they hope to find greater economic opportunities for themselves and educational advancement for their children. They come on as families, not individuals. They are the ones responsible for revitalizing the Chinatowns, which had been on the decline since the American-born Chinese started to move to the suburbs. It is this group that Tsai (1986) describes as highly educated, tending to emphasize cultural pluralism and national diversity. They also emphasize retention of ethnic cultural traits, family practices, subcultural activities and distinctive identities. They belong to America's middle class and are occupationally integrated but not yet acculturated. It is mainly due to this successful group of parents and their children, both academically and economically, that gave rise to the myth of the "model minority."

Hsu (1971) related that it would be difficult for the Chinese to submerge their minority identity for two basic reasons. First, the Chinese sense of security and satisfaction are derived from within and without the Chinese matrix of social relations. Second, a complete identity and assimilation as Americans are always subjected to rejection by the mainstream Americans. Hence, they tend to have a double identity similar to that of a professional woman. Trueba (1989) states that when immigrants who come to this country are unable to respond positively to the social and cultural discontinuities and rejection by the dominant culture, they may lose their home language and culture. This would further aggravate their social isolation.

The question of identity and pride in one's cultural heritage in the American context appears to be difficult to comprehend for those without a clear sense of their political rights and a knowledge of the democratic philosophy in a rapidly changing cultural landscape where, by the turn of the century, the majority will become the minority. This is exemplified by the comment of Art Yee, a student at Berkeley High School (KPIX, Oct. 18, 1994). He said, "I am embarrassed to bring my friends to my house. It's hard to be American and yet you are Chinese." He goes further to say that if he mixes with Whites, he will be called "stand out" or "whitewashed." This phenomenon could be described as the problem of the marginal Chinese, where "marginality" is described as one's ambiguous status of belonging simultaneously to more than one collective identity (Wang, 1991).

Various reasons have been given for the Chinese immigration to the United States of America by Chan (1991), Takaki (1989, 1993), Tsai (1986), and Wilson (1991). The reasons encompass the following push and pull factors, such as political turmoil at home (collapse of the Manchu government, natural calamities, Taiping Rebellion, economic depression, encroachment of Western economic and territorial expansion), the discovery of gold in California, jobs and other economic opportunities. Tien (Newsweek, October, 31, 1994:19) commented:

Yet if there is a nation that promises to be a model for how to make diversity work, it is the United States. This is the nation with the strongest and deepest democratic roots. This is a nation with a living Constitution that guarantees rights to all its citizens. This is a nation that has taken pride not in its homogeneity, but in its immigrant heritage.

Cultural Adjustments

With the presence of so many distinct cultural differences between the Chinese and mainstream Anglo-American, to what extent should a new immigrant "transform" oneself to be at ease and accepted in this new society? There are various stages of making oneself conform to this society: accommodation, acculturation, or assimilation. As discussed previously, the stage of "transformation" a Chinese belongs to depends on the historical period of arrival, country of origin, previous political, social and economic experiences, and a myriad other factors. Grossman (1995), in his review of literature, listed some of them as level of education, the ability to speak the language of the other culture, the amount of compatibility between the two cultures, the attitude about the other culture, the amount of support within their original cultural group, and their status as immigrant or refugees.

The Dilemma of Acceptance

Chinese, being new immigrants, would like to become part of American society--stakeholders to their new country of adoption. It is not an easy task.

Some Chinese may perceive that assimilation exemplifies the best way of acceptance by American society, but the process may not be as simple as it sounds for "assimilation does not depend solely on the predilections of the newcomers. It can occur only when members of the host society give immigrants a chance to become equal partners in the world they share and mutually shape" (Chan, 1991). She further explains that the Chinese cannot be

exact replicas of those in Asia, nor a simple blending of Chinese and mainstream cultures, nor carbon copies of other communities in America, but "rather components of an increasing multiethnic American landscape and they can best be understood and appreciated as such."

The dilemma of being a part of equal citizenry is best reflected by what Takaki (1989:11) reveals as "many of America's immigrants found they were not allowed to feel at home in the United States and even their grandchildren and great-grandchildren still find they are not viewed and accepted as Americans." These earlier Asian immigrants have been transformed into "strangers" in America, not simply because of their migration to a foreign land but also their country of origin and their reception in America. Asians are physically distinguishable from Whites . This is referred to by Robert E. Park as "racial uniforms."

That Asian Americans have been treated differently is also supported by Koyama and Lee (1989:8) in their report to the Chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley. ". . . because of their distinctive racial and ethnic differences from the prevailing society, Asian Americans are subjected to being regarded as 'foreigners' and being 'no longer a part of America's melting pot, they become outsiders, objects of fear and distrust.'" While some continue to live under a system of racial discrimination, others have attempted to become Americans by shedding their past, their ethnicity, language, customs, dress and culture.

The very fact that the majority population is unable to distinguish between fifth or sixth generation Asians that made up the bulk of recent immigrants attests to the fact that the majority population view all Asians from a

racial viewpoint. He went on to quote the frustration of an Hawaiian Chinese student at UCLA who said (Takaki, 1989:230), "I was not an American in spite of the fact that I had citizenship privileges . . . I am only a Chinese-made American in spirit." She concludes that although she placed American citizenship above her ethnicity, it meant nothing in the United States of America. Not only were immigrants from the "second wave" treated as strangers, but also those from the first wave as well. They often experienced a shared sense of rejection by White society where they were picked on, their English mocked, become objects of hostility and abusive language, and thrown food at by the White majority. He went on to quote some of the stereotypes to which Asian Americans were subjected, such as their lacking the aggressiveness required for administrative jobs, or their inarticulation and accents. The irony is that Whites with German, French or English accents do not seem to be similarly handicapped, and Asian Americans are frequently viewed as technicians rather than administrators.

It is indeed a daunting task for Asian Americans in general, and Chinese in particular to be integrated into the mainstream society as waves of anti-Asian sentiments abound. For instance, on college campuses slogan such as "look out for the Asian invasion" is common, MIT stands for "made in Taiwan," UCLA means University of Caucasians Living Among Asians (Takaki, 1989) and the statement "Will the last person (meaning white) who leaves (Monterey Park in Los Angeles) bring along the flag?" Takaki (1993) reveals that recently Asian American students have been given new labels such as "nerds" and are being told there are too many of them on campus.

Liu and Yu (1975) discussed the Chinese "marginal" man as one who brought with him his ways of doing things from his country of origin and who has undergone the acculturation process and taken on the values and norms of the host society. The inability of an immigrant to divorce himself entirely from his cultural roots, combined with the inability to totally embrace the new culture in which one becomes a member, creates a state of double cultural orientations known as "marginality." The claim that Asians are a successful minority must be seen in light of their suffering and hardships. Takaki (1989) and Wang (1991) discussed the dilemma of the Chinese "marginal man" caught between two cultures where he cannot feel at home with Chinese people and is rejected by the mainstream population. This feeling of ambivalence gives rise to much unnecessary social tension and conflict. This state of affairs is best portrayed by Koyama and Lee (1989) in explicating the dilemma of the Asian American. They reveal that when the Asian American students encounter racism, racial stereotyping, or racial insensitivity for the first time, and after having abandoned their own cultural heritage, they feel rejected by White peers and gravitate toward their Asian-American peers. On the other hand, when they are with their Asian-American friends, they often feel ambivalent about this lack of integration, yet would be labelled as "clannish" or "cliquish" by White friends.

Grossman (1995), in discussing the question of entering into mainstream European-American middle class culture by certain ethnic groups, is aware that some immigrants reject their ethnic background in order to succeed; however, he observes that there is suggestive evidence that for Chinese Americans, it may be less necessary to deny their cultural heritage in order to enter the middle class. Furthermore, he relates that there are four options poor and non-

European American students have in resolving the cultural conflicts when their learning and behavioral characteristics do not meet the expectations of the middle class, European American-oriented schools. First, the students can maintain the values, beliefs and practices of their cultural heritage and reject the mainstream culture (traditional/cultural resistance); second, they can reject their heritage and adopt the new mainstream culture (assimilation); third, they can identify with and accept both cultural systems and select the most appropriate one for any given situation (bicultural/cultural incorporation); and lastly, they can combine and alter both their original cultural norms and the alternate ones to create a unique set of norms (cultural transmutation).

Assimilation Process

According to Creely (1969), there are two kinds of assimilation. One is cultural assimilation or acculturation in which the immigrant group learns the manners and the style of a new society, and second, structural in which members of the immigrant group relate to members of other groups, particularly at the intimate levels of friendship and family formation, without any regard to ethnic differences. Creely lists several steps in ethnic assimilation follows:

- a) cultural shock--where the patterns of behavior that were established in the Old World are jolted and jarred and appear to be under savage attack;
- b) organization and emerging self-consciousness--where new immigrants are learning a new language, clawing their way up the economic ladder, reflecting on whether the old culture will be lost

with the realization that the old language, culture and religion must be preserved at the same time that they must become Americans;

- c) assimilation of the elite--where ambivalence begins to emerge and some groups enter into at least the lower middle class; the elite would spearhead its entry into the mainstream, but be ashamed of its ethnic background; this group becomes neither part of the old but neither are group members fully accepted by the mainstream group;
- d) militancy--where the immigrant group has become fully middle class and even edges toward upper middle class; members have some power and tend to show that they are more patriotic than any other group; they start to leverage their power overcompensating for their previous rejection by the larger group; there is suspicion and mistrust of the larger society, and here exists the most danger of conflicts with other ethnic groups;
- e) self-hatred and anti-militancy--where members of the immigrant group have moved into the upper middle and professional class; the elites begin to alienate themselves from the immigrant group and are embarrassed by the militancy, narrowness and provincialism of their own past; self-hatred begins to set in, yet members cannot completely forsake their culture; it is a time of intense ambivalence; and
- f) emerging adjustment--where a new generation appears on the scene who are upper middle or upper class; they are conscious of their ethnic origin, and do not feel ashamed of it nor have a desire to run from it; it is the stage where Hansen's Law begins to operate (the law

states what the father forgets, the son remembers); they begin to wonder why other new immigrant groups who have not been as successful as they are noisy and militant.

To view the process of acculturation from another perspective, we could look into Postiglione's (1983) proposal of five models to describe what happens when different groups come together:

- a) Anglo-conformity, popularized as "Americanization," maintains that groups not originally from the European continent threaten American society and either should be restricted from immigrating to the United States or be compelled to conform. The dominant group's values are accepted as the values everyone should assume; hence, the burden for change rests with the immigrant group.
- b) the "melting-pot" theory merges the best "traits" of various groups with no single set of immigrant group values expected to dominate because it was expected that subordinate groups would reduce their values and norms to a kind of lowest common denominator;
- c) cultural pluralism places emphasis on the contributions each culture makes to American society and on the value of each ethnic group;
- d) "emerging culture" views the larger American society as being modified in some way by the arrival of each new group, who themselves are modified as they become acculturated group members; and

- e) "impact-integration" focuses on the inter- and intra-cultural group dynamics colliding and integrating with each other, which leads to a synthesis which contributes meaning and importance to the society.

With these various viewpoints on the acculturation process of new immigrants, what are the explanations then why certain groups seem to be more successfully integrated than others? Trueba (1989), in quoting Roosens (1987) presents five hypotheses to explain the success or failure phenomenon of immigrants in their integration into modern technological societies and cultural adaptations in their host country. They are:

- 1) Cultural discontinuities. It is the manner in which an individual reacts to the discontinuities, rather than the mere presence of the discontinuities, that are determinative. It has been found that children from the middle and upper classes seem to adjust faster to modern industrial settings than their lower income rural counterparts. The speed of integration and the overall success or failure of the minority group is also affected by the relationship between the social and cultural backgrounds of the immigrants and those of the host society.
- 2) Low status and low income level. Some scholars believe that children of upper and middle class families tend to reach higher educational levels, to network successfully and to hold power, while children of poor families tend to drop out of school and hold menial jobs. The reasons given have much to do in the way these children are treated in school in terms of course selection by the counselors, expectation of teachers, availability of key courses, access to

resources and information required to succeed in school, family resources and their interactions with adults.

- 3) Minorities' response to low status. In referring to Ogbu's explanation of the failure of blacks, it was explained that they have been forced into and treated in a caste-like position that resulted in their social and psychological surrender of any future chance of success.
- 4) Parents' role in immigration where the temporary status has an impact on the achievement of immigrants.
- 5) Genetic or inborn characteristics where some people are endowed with higher level of intelligence which enables them to obtain higher achievements.

Lue and Malony (1983), in reviewing the literature on the stress resulting from the acculturation process, state that increased personal disorganization, family disruption, behavioral disorders and even mental illness are common ailments among the immigrant population. The possibilities for differences and conflicts are great as competing cultures are available, inviting and even pressing, especially among ethnic groups in the United States. The culture clash, as fundamental as the concept of American's individualism versus the group or context-situated culture of the Chinese, is discussed by Takaki (1989). Thoen (1982) also relates that Asian refugees encounter severe "culture shock" in adjusting to liberal contemporary family roles and personal sexual freedom associated with their new host country.

The stress that has been created as a result of the cultural differences may result in students attempting to cope with it in three possible ways as related by Trueba (1989). The first is to withdraw from the painful encounters

and isolate themselves from the world around them; second, they may compensate with excessive and anxious efforts to participate, often mimicking behaviors that are not yet fully understood; third, they may choose to participate under protest and to demonstrate their anger outwardly. Wong (1989) relates that immigrant children, besides facing the problems in learning English, are often overcome by the stress of relocation. They have to face the stress of being forced to drop their mother tongue, being punished or shamed when they do not do well in English and they lack the emotional support which can harm the students in the long run. Students have to adjust themselves to the difference between alphabetic and non-alphabetic languages, behaviors like restraint, reticence and respect for authority inhibiting verbal performance, overemphasis on technical professions and subjects and the stereotyping of teachers and counselors that Chinese students are all good at mathematics.

Hosokawa (1969) also notes that in schools, Asian children had been taught to believe in the American doctrine of freedom of opportunity, in sharing the American dream of progressing as far as their God-given abilities and energies can take them and yet, in reality, the world outside the classroom is a racist society where physical attributes often are more a factor than a person's ability. The panelists in a conference (Lee, 1979) repeatedly stressed the gap between the cultures of school and home as a big problem for the children. Parents often are confused about drawing the line in allowing their children to become Americanized at too fast a rate, and at the same time wanting their children to preserve the values they cherish. This difficulty can be seen in light of the too permissive attitude prevailing in American schools and the demand for strict discipline and behavior at home.

At the school level, it has been cited by Garcia (1978:6) that "teachers neither know, nor have they been taught, that ethnicity, racism and ethnocentrism are endemic factors in American society that influence teaching and learning." He goes on to say that teachers have not been prepared to teach ethnically different students and that the policy of assimilation translates into "melting away ethnic differences as a function of good teaching." Hence, minority students are disadvantaged to the extent that their cultures differ from the dominant culture of the school, and cultural conflicts result in subtle and unconscious manners that at times go unrecognized by the teacher. Saville-Troike (1979) observes that most teachers in America are trained to meet the educational needs of only the middle class children and that children from other cultures are usually perceived as disadvantaged or deficient (their cultural experiences differ from the mainstream middle class norms). She points out the fault is not so much in the transmission of the dominant American culture but in the lack of provisions or respect for the children's culturally diverse backgrounds. In addition, the process of adjustment becomes more complicated when the school is teaching a set of mainstream philosophies that contradict what is taught at home, like individualism versus group orientations, challenging parents' ideas versus obedience, aggressive/assertive versus humility/filial piety as noted by Hosokawa (1969). Besides this, the panelists at a conference (Lee, 1979) repeatedly stress that rejection and the tendency to denigrate Asian culture and people by the peers at schools was indeed a major problem. As it is, children are already intimidated by the schools, and when their peers show prejudice and equate the poor English skills with low intelligence, the problem is compounded. Another problem might be that the

teacher would not pay special attention to a child who speaks little or no English, the child who is sitting "like an angel." Hence, many students are being overlooked. Wong (1989) stresses that even culturally sensitive teachers must still go beyond the broad knowledge of a student's "ancestral culture" to attend to the subtleties present in the dynamics of interaction between groups from different backgrounds.

Chinese Assimilation Process

While discussing the Chinese in Hawaii, Engel and Dickson (1985) state that traditional Chinese values emphasizing family and education have been maintained despite acculturation and assimilation. Guthrie (1985:231) cautions against making the wrong assumption based on Chinese pragmatism like placing great importance on the learning of English and the American way of life as a desire for total assimilation, for "while they hope for structural integration and access to jobs, they do not necessarily seek it on a cultural level." For the recent immigrants, their short-term needs are not so much a debate about cultural assimilation but rather for survival with getting a "job, education, upward mobility and a ticket out of the ghetto."

In the effort to adjust to a new society, recent Chinese immigrants must contend with formidable forces of racial discriminations as experienced by lack of job opportunities, promotion (glass ceiling), and admission to school and colleges. Chan (1991:42) notes that " . . . racial discrimination is what separates the historical experiences of Asian immigrants from that of Europeans on the

one hand, and makes it resemble that of enslaved Africans and dispossessed Native Americans and Mexican Americans on the other hand." Furthermore, she classifies seven categories of hostility that the Chinese had and/or presently have to confront, such as prejudice, economic discrimination, political disenfranchisement, physical violence, immigration exclusion, social segregation and incarceration. Prejudice and systematic bias have not disappeared but have taken new forms. Asian Americans live in a state of ambivalence, lauded as a "successful" or "model minority" on the one hand but subjected to continuing unfair treatment, including occasional outbursts of racially motivated violence, on the other hand. Guthrie (1985) states that the barriers associated with race and class in the United States are still prohibitive. It is this form of discrimination that led to disillusionment of many Chinese when they found that despite their education they had difficulties in getting promotions, or that despite their efforts to become acculturated, for example taking on an English first name, they continued to have problems. They discovered that the employers were still color conscious. Hence, many were trapped in an ethnic and low-skilled labor market in the Chinatowns which Takaki (1989) describes as an "ethnic island."

The different values that have been interacting and demanding the attention of Chinese children sometimes can lead to undesirable result. As Tsai (1986) notes, some foreign-born Chinese teenagers, frustrated by cultural and language problems and alienated from the other students, were found to have been involved in frequent and violent incidents on and off school campus. Furthermore, Wong (1989) states that recent immigrant Chinese students around the age of puberty have the most difficult time getting settled in their new

society where they face hostility not only from the Whites students but also from local-born Chinese. She cautions against assuming that all Chinese are alike, as a Chinese immigrant coming from mainland China, Taiwan, or Hong Kong is coming from the same linguistic heritage, but his past experiences are different. For instance, they come from different education systems that stress different concepts of their history. Taiwan may stress the promotion of traditional Confucianism, China emphasize nationalistic sentiments, and Hong Kong encourage political apathy and historical amnesia among their respective students.

That Chinese parents and students have to combat discrimination in education has been well-documented by Low (1981) in the San Francisco public school system, where they must cope with racist superintendents and board members, as well as the general prejudice of the larger society.

Graham (1981) conducted a study to measure the relative degrees of acculturative stress among groups of students from different ethnic backgrounds at the Brigham Young University Hawaii Campus, which includes Chinese (7.0%) respondents. Among the findings, one showed that the Chinese students were very rule-oriented and had an aversion towards loud, physical, explosive and unkind behavior and hence had difficulty getting along with those who exhibit such behaviors. While Asian students seemed to be most concerned about academics, especially the Hong Kong Chinese respondents, they were also the most excluded and less involved in multicultural educational setting. The study discovered that if Chinese students experienced stress due to academic deficiencies, they would stoically commit more study time at the expense of social activities. Another finding showed that of all the acculturative

process, English proficiency or its deficiency appear to be the most critical. Those instructors who identify English with ignorance or who themselves lack second language proficiency appear, consciously or unconsciously, the most invidious toward multilingual students. The study also revealed that the Chinese perceived themselves as being civilized and intellectual and that their socialization taught them to hold back their temper and emotions. The "real man" in Chinese culture is not often one of great muscular strength, but one who is scholarly, intellectual with an ability to stay calm under pressure and able to abstain from the use of force. To the Chinese, the brain should always rule the muscles. However, Hacker (1994) comments that recent immigrants to America are less beset by culture shock due to the advancement of the electronic media.

Chao (n.d.), in her research on the plight of urban Chinese immigrant, found that the burden of adjustment to the new land seemed to fall inordinately heavy upon the shoulders of the children in immigrant families. As Takaki (1989) has noted, they have to overcome the difficulties of learning English as a second language with the purpose of pleasing their parents, especially those who were professionals in their land of origin. Kitano (1974) has noted that a major problem for many Chinese is bicultural adaptation, which he defines as one who is acculturated to a certain extent and sees the value of learning the American way especially in the system of higher education, but does not wish to assimilate because he sees the value of retaining much of his ethnic heritage and culture. Kitano (1974) emphasizes the stressful conditions faced by many members of this group, such as overcrowded quarters in cramped Chinatowns,

the constant flow of new immigrants and the lack of opportunities, and states these cannot be ignored much longer.

The problems faced by new Asian immigrants to a new environment are revealed by Lee (1979). Most of them arrive with little or no understanding of English. Many of them experience the lonely feeling of a stranger in the new and bewildering environment, or suffer from ridicule, discrimination and lack of peer support, particularly when there are only a few Asian immigrant children in the same school. Their parents often cannot help them, due to a lack of command of the English language and preoccupation with settling into a new environment where they themselves need the help of others.

Bennet and Kimmel's (1986) study of 13 Chinese college graduate students indicates that academic adjustment in the American environment rarely are perceived as a primary problem. In fact, several students note that they are better prepared than their American classmates in their area of specialization. The only academic problem they faced was their difficulty in English and uncertainty regarding appropriate norms for class behavior.

Furthermore, Asians are simply dismissed as "different people" whose values and cultures are too enigmatic to be understood owing to the "double-image concept" of the more sophisticated population in America where the two contradictory images are juxtaposed--aggressive and unassuming; militaristic and aesthetic, insolent and polite; rigid and adaptable; submissive and resentful of being pushed around; loyal and treacherous; brave and timid. That English proficiency has been found to be a major disabling factor in the Asian Americans' efforts to make successful educational, occupational and psychological adjustments to American society, as documented by Outlook

(1989), comes as no surprise. Cloud (1991), citing other research studies (First & Carrera, 1988; Olsen, 1988) finds tremendous emotional and psychological costs to the new immigrant children trying to acculturate into this society. The problems encountered are disruption and trauma, confusion and sadness, family upheaval, language and cultural barriers, housing, health, economic, etc.

Tsai (1986) recounts the difficulty the Chinese have in this society. They have to struggle to get into America's middle class and for many, suffered severe psychological disorders, such as excessive conformity, alienation, lack of confidence and low self-esteem. He goes on to prescribe a rather controversial hypothesis. For Chinese to be assimilated into the American society, they need to give up their respective culture. He maintains that first and second generations Chinese had retarded their acculturation due to their adherence to the Chinese heritage, language and religion in America.

How far have the Chinese assimilate into mainstream American culture? According to Nee and Sanders (1985), who cite a study of the assimilation of Chinese American in Washington, D.C., by Kuo and Lin (1977) who define the indexes of assimilation as occupational distribution, educational attainment, residence and intermarriage. Evidence in these indexes show a trend towards full assimilation. The conclusion drawn by Nee and Sanders (1985) from their analysis, in a broader sense, asserts that Asian Americans, as a group, are on the road to assimilation in the United States. It is also noted by Takei (1981) that most of the first generation Chinese born in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century was considered assimilated into this society. This was helped in part by the favorable employment situation from the 1940s to the 1960s.

It is not as easy a task for Chinese to be assimilated into American society for, as Wong (1988) observes, the rapid linguistic and cultural assimilation of young foreign-born Chinese Americans, the subject of many a success story in the media, is often achieved at the high cost of self-esteem. This was also cited by Takei (1981) regarding reports of delinquent and criminal activities among most foreign-born youths in New York and San Francisco Chinatowns, which goes to suggest that many of the recent Chinese immigrants families are experiencing difficulty coping with the social and economic problems with which they are confronted. In quoting Odo, Takei (1981) states that this small minority frequently encountered abuse from non-Asian pupils and as a consequence, suffered physically and emotionally while growing up in this country.

In comparing the changes that have taken place in the Chinese effort towards acculturation, Tsai (1986) points to the more salient features related to education, language and behavior. He asserts that there has been slow but progressive acculturation. Chinese Americans are becoming more aggressive and brash, more active in politics, less authoritarian in dealings with their wives and children, discarding such traditions as filial piety, ancestor worship, expensive weddings and religious ceremonies. However, certain Chinese values that are considered essential are still retained, such as reverence for family, respect for education and hard work, cultivation of propriety and patience and restrictiveness in the upbringing of children. Vernon (1982), in quoting Fong (1973), observes that there are many American traits that the Chinese used to dislike which they are now accepting, such as aggressiveness,

individualism, impulsiveness, the drive to autonomy, permissiveness to children, sex equality, and active participation in political affairs.

Weiss (1974), in his research based on a Chinese American community, concludes that Chinese have adopted many extrinsic and, to a lesser extent, intrinsic traits of the American culture, although they have not simultaneously given up and rejected all the tenets of their Chinese heritage. He also concludes that Chinese primary relationships remain, for the most part, with other Chinese; hence, structural assimilation (defined as large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society on primary group level) is still a myth. This is due to the racial and cultural barriers that continually prevent Chinese from full membership in American society. Efforts towards acculturation by the recent Chinese immigrant students are often met with hostility and rejection by the European Americans as well as by the native-born Chinese Americans who feel they have more in common with the dominant group than with the newcomers (Wong, 1989). To these second and third generation Chinese, Chinese culture may be an alien culture rather than their "native heritage."

Lee (1979) has suggested that one way to help alleviate the problem of adjustment is to find a middle ground to allow the children to keep and maintain their own identity and at the same time to be part of the American society. They have to be aware that being different does not mean inferiority or superiority. Wong (1988), in referring to linguistic assimilation of the Chinese immigrants, comments that it varies according to the individual's coping strategies. Siu (1993), in her case study on Ivan Chan, finds that the parents were preparing their son to function biculturally in this American society by promoting a

selective blend of the best of American and Chinese cultural traits-- assertiveness, talkativeness, confidence, being able to mix with diverse groups of children, and yet retaining the Chinese cultural traits of respect for one's elders, a sense of family obligation, hard work, discipline and reverence for learning. In order to achieve this end, the family members invest considerable energy, time and money. Cloud (1991), in quoting a study by Wong and Quintana (1987), indicates that biculturalism seems to be the most satisfying form of acculturation. Also, in reviewing other research study (Landsman, et al. 1990), Cloud infers that the quantitative and qualitative data obtained seem to indicate that bicultural adolescents have advantages over their less bicultural counterparts. Lin and Fu (1990), in their investigation into the differences and similarities in child-rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant Chinese and Caucasian-American parents, finds that patterns of child rearing are undergoing changes, with attempts at adapting to the American ways while at the same time holding on to certain traditional family values, especially Confucianism. This will facilitate the presence of a bicultural socialization pattern.

Chinese and American Cultures Compared

It is believed that the more two cultures have in common, the easier it is for the people to be acculturated. People of Asian descent are different from people of European descent. What are the differences and how wide is the chasm between the Chinese culture from the American culture? A brief review of the cultural differences will provide a general picture of the two cultures.

Sung (1985) believes that the language, ways of thinking, behavior, responses, customs and fundamental beliefs of the two cultures are poles apart.

A first glimpse of the cultural differences is provided by Bean Sprout (1980). According to them, Chinese American children live in two cultures.

Second, strong and close family feelings are built by having children learn early to address family members by proper kinship terms and to relate in a proper manner, have respect for older siblings and other family members, and through the practice of multi-parenting. Tsai (1986) prefers to call this kinship dependence rather than independence. When translated into practice, it can be seen that White parents in America would insist on privacy for all individuals, but Chinese parents, insist on maintaining a complete community of interests. Things that belong to the house are to be shared. While White parents refuse to allow their youngsters to enter the real world of adults, Chinese parents invite their children to take part in their social activities, such as weddings, dinners, theaters, etc., rather than turning them over to baby-sitters. Child-rearing practices are highlighted by strong parental role models to bring honor to the family. Individualism is a prominent characteristic of American life. According to Hsu (1971), this is the self-reliance that one has for oneself without the need for help from others. However, the Chinese are situation-centered and their way of life stresses the importance of an individual finding a satisfactory balance between oneself and the environment of men and things. In the editors' introduction (Seybolt & Clark, 1981), it was mentioned that the Chinese have always rejected individualism, so valued in the West. It is considered synonymous with selfishness.

Third, Chinese American children are not born with a quiet and compliant temperament but rather they are taught respect for teachers and cooperation in schools. These traits are very often taken for a lack of spontaneity and passivity. When a child is not actively participating, that child may be waiting patiently for a turn to begin to speak rather than to interrupt someone else. Immigrant Chinese students when they encounter the disrespect accorded to teachers and school authorities for the first time in American classrooms were extremely upset and dismayed (Sung, 1985).

Fourth, the idea of independence is better expressed as standing on one's own feet rather as standing alone, being resourceful and competent in what one does rather than being able to speak or otherwise perform singly, as in "show and tell" activities. A Chinese American would find it far easier to perform together with two or three other children than to take the spotlight alone. According to Sung (1985), an immigrant Chinese child is expected to be able to take care of himself at an earlier age, but is discouraged from socializing with people outside the family until a much later age. Parents exercise close supervision over their children. American schools and teachers do not see eye to eye on this score, and parental authority is often undermined by the school and teachers.

Fifth, forbearance, highly valued by the Chinese, means being patient and self-restrained concerning one's own desires and, on the other hand, generous and forgiving with other people. This ideal conflicts with the contemporary American values of competition and individualism. The guideline for forbearance in women is even stronger: "I would rather be wronged by someone than to wrong someone" is a clear invitation to exploitation in

American society. Tsai (1986) considers other examples, such as giving up pleasure or comfort in favor of someone and to give in during a quarrel. He also notes that there have been some acculturation moving from the emphasis of restraint of strong feeling, obedience, harmony in human relations and formality in interpersonal relations to the spontaneity, assertiveness, competitiveness and informality of the American society. According to Sung (1985), the man who resorts to violence is at the bottom of the social ladder. There is a Chinese saying that the gentleman uses his wits, not his fists. Hence, the Chinese parent teaches his son not to be aggressive and stay out of fights. In contrast, the American father teaches his son that the ability to fight is a sign of manhood. Sung (1985) relates that a sense of duty and obligation takes precedence over self-gratification.

Sixth, obedience is taught less as a matter of personal authority (because I said so) than society's authority (the way things ought to be). Disobedience is regarded as a sign of disrespect that is not to be tolerated. This conflicts with the contemporary American ideal of standing up for oneself and being assertive, resulting in "questionable compliance." Chinese American children must work out their own resolutions until Chinese American adults come to understand that questioning on the part of children is not necessarily disrespect for parents or teachers, but an aspect of the necessary redefinition of relations between generations. According to Tsai (1986), Americans do not understand the Chinese tradition of respect for elders, superiors and all those who occupy positions of authority and honor. Chinese parents would apologize to the school administrators or teachers for infractions committed by their children, but often a white or black parent of a poorly performing student

generally believes that the teacher or school has failed. The Chinese parents would believe that the student was not trying hard enough.

The seventh difference cited by Sung (1985) is sexuality. She states that in American schools, sexuality is a very strong and pervasive force. School is as much a place for male/female association as it is an institution for learning. For the Chinese, school is a place for serious business. Interest in the opposite sex is highly distracting and may be considered improper. Dating is an unfamiliar concept, and sexual attractiveness is underplayed and not flaunted as it is according to American ways. Related to this is the demonstration of affection where physical intimacy and love are private matters and should never be exhibited in public. This is where the Chinese are often regarded as unfriendly, standoffish and desirous of keeping apart.

Eighth, attitude in sports. According to Sung (1985), the traditional Chinese way of thinking is that development of mental faculties is more important than development of the physique. To the Chinese mind, sports are viewed as frivolous play and a waste of time and energy.

Ninth, Sung (1985) also stated another highly prized cultural value among the Chinese--education. However, the immigrant Chinese are not getting the rewards that are consistent with the values taught at home, as education is not highly valued in American society. It is generally perceived that the academic standards are lower here than in Hong Kong or Taiwan. Chinese students have a value conflict here as the bright student is not the one who is respected and looked up to in American schools. In fact, they are the butt of jokes and are branded as 'nerds', 'bookworm', 'teacher's pet', 'egghead', etc.

Tenth, thrift is a value widely practised by the Chinese (Sung, 1985), as opposed to the American way of buying on credit. In Chinese society, a person who is frugal is thought of more highly than one who can exhibit material symbols of success. To the Chinese way of thinking, this form of thrift and sacrifice is valued, whereas to the American mind, this may appear unnecessary, even not understood.

Sung (1985) shows another difference in the conception of role models in terms of the heroes and heroines that the students admire. In the United States, the most popular figures are movie, television and stage stars, sports figures, politicians, authors, inventors and scientists. As for the Chinese, the role models are people holding high moral virtues such as the filial sons or daughters, sacrificing mother, loyal minister, war hero and revolutionaries, patriot and workers who put the nation above selves.

In a conference of Chinese and American women organized by the Johnson Foundation (1979), it was disclosed that only 12.0% of all American families are nuclear, where the wife stays home to look after the children. Increased economic independence and a general change in values seemed to have caused an increase in American divorces. In contrast, the Chinese consider a family as the "basic cell of society" and that divorce is harmful to children. They believe it is the society's responsibility to help ensure that marriages are not dissolved. The Chinese women revealed that they do not have to face the dilemma of choosing between career and family as it is considered the responsibilities of both partners.

Lee (1979) points out several distinct differences between Asian and Western culture at the school level which, if ignored, are likely to make Asian

children suffer the consequences. The differences enumerated are the respect for authority figures; forwardness is equated with rudeness; inability to communicate with the teachers and counsellors about their personal problems are dictated by a sense of shame. All these are in direct opposite to that extolled by American as the value of directness and frankness.

Smith (1989), in referring to the research carried out by Fiske (1984), which suggests that there are differences in the way Chinese mothers react to the behavior of their children and their expectations of their children when compared to the American mothers. This may explain why Chinese youngsters from infancy through high school appear ready to accept the academic environment better than youngsters from the West. Chinese mothers expect and wish that their children stay close to them, respect the elders and conform to the ways of family life, while American mothers expect their children to be laughing and smiling easily, be active and talkative. Other differences were also stated, such as, first, their attitudes towards leniency and strictness where Chinese families are indulgent, extremely lenient, and overly casual about discipline and readily yielding in most cases to young children at less than six or seven years of age; however, once they enter school they are disciplined in ways that are positive in academic achievement. Second, the Chinese mother takes virtually all the responsibilities for the child between age zero to six; she sleeps with the child and never puts him in a crisis situation. Third, Chinese children received multiple mothering. Fourth, Chinese seem to have puritanical ideas regarding sexuality. Fifth, Chinese place great emphasis on self-discipline and proper behavior and sixth, asocial or unsocial behavior is punished by Chinese parents but generally not by American parents.

In comparing the cultural values of Asians and Americans, Thoen (1982) cites the issues of women's liberation, assertiveness training, divorce, access to birth control and abortion on demand as not part of the traditional Asian patriarchal family lifestyle.

The passivity that has often been ascribed to the Chinese is believed by Tsai (1986) as not a cultural trait but rather the product of their experience as foreigners in this country, from their being confined to non-competitive jobs and being treated with neglect by the majority population before World War II. He relates this to the social and political forces that drove the Chinese into the Chinatown ghettos, uncomplaining, withdrawing, apolitical and passive.

Tsai (1986) comments that the American national character is filled with paradoxes like narrowness and magnanimity, benevolence and exasperation, sympathy and hostility, Christian love and racial hatred. This is what Trueba (1989) finds the heart of the American culture, a set of antithesis such as individualism and conformity, consensus and debate, continuity and change, egalitarian philosophy and concentration of power of large corporation functioning outside any principles of checks and balances.

In matters of religion, Tsai (1986) relates that the Chinese view the universe as a trinity of heaven, earth and man, where heaven directs, earth produces and man cooperates. Heaven replaces the Judeo-Christian concept of God. Confucianism allows the widest individual discretion in matters of personal belief and pays little attention to matters of God and afterlife. A Confucian could be an agnostic or even an atheist, or might worship a variety of local deities. For the Christian there has to be an unflinching faith in a fixed creed. In Daoism, the religious idea centers around a search for a long and

serene life to be attained through simplicity, tranquility and harmony with nature through the use of phrenologists, geomancy readers, physiognomists, mediums and fortune tellers. Buddhism views suffering as a result of desire and the goal is the extinction of desire which will end pain and ensure the entry into nirvana. The three philosophies of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism that the majority of the Chinese believe have prompted others to describe the "Chinese as donning a Confucian cap, wearing a Taoist robe and putting on a Buddhist sandal" (Tsai, 1986:43).

Generational Conflict

New immigrants entering a different cultural setting will inevitably face some daunting tasks in adjustment. The differences between parents and their adolescent children have the potential of being developed into generational conflicts. This problem is compounded when adolescents grew up in a different cultural environment from their parents.

One of the most difficult tasks parents have to explain to their children is the down-grading of their occupational and perhaps socio-economic status in this country. Portes and Zhou (1993), in referring to the research and theories on the post-1965 immigration, state that the outlook for the second generation can be very different from that of their immigrant parents. Newly-arrived immigrants will perform entry-level menial jobs without hesitation, that are commonly shunned by their American-reared offsprings. Chan (1991) mentions that bringing youngsters up in a world where their parents themselves are treated as pariahs can be a difficult task.

Age of immigrants on entering America can influence how they face adjustment problems in their new society. Lue and Malony (1983), when discussing stress related to acculturation, points to intergenerational differences as problematic, for parents and children have different rates of acculturation owing to the wide variation of the roles, attitudes and values between the Chinese and American cultures.

In the face of discrimination in America, Chan (1991) notes that where the length of residence is of no consequence, second generation Americans usually found themselves no better off than their parents. In fact, they would be worse off as the latter, at least, could find solace in their heritage.

A common believe is that Asian parents are particularly strict on their children. However, Stevenson et al. (1990) find that the popular image of the Asian mother as excessively demanding of their children and holding unrealistic aspirations for their children were not upheld in their research on Chinese, Japanese and American mothers' expectations of their children.

In the process of acculturation, Chao (n.d.) finds that new Chinese immigrants fear their children might become too Americanized and forget their Chinese heritage. It was noted in Takaki (1989) that to be American was to be acculturated. How far and in what form this acculturation should take is open to interpretation, and in this effort lies the inevitability of generational conflict between parents wanting their Chinese children to learn the Chinese language and the culture of the old world. This inevitable generational clash for some can be clearly exemplified by the respondent in Takaki (1989: 258): "My parents wanted me to grow up a good Chinese girl, but I am an American and I can't accept all the old Chinese ways and ideas." Added to this potential clash is the

attitude of parents towards the female, where educated girls want more independence and freedom to decide and be responsible for themselves as noted in the differences between Betty Lee Sung and her parents when she was not encouraged to attend college.

Hosokawa (1969:172) states that the contradictory messages that Japanese students receive in school and at home differ widely. In school, they were "taught to challenge, encouraged to make their own decisions, to be aggressive and to assert their individuality" which contradicts the cultural heritage of "respect of elders, filial piety even to the point of sacrificing one's personal desires and ambitions, unquestioning respect of authority, a deep sensitivity to the opinions of one's peers and a sense of group rather than individual responsibility." The situation is made worse when their parents instructed the children "to honor, respect and obey the teachers who were indoctrinating the youngsters in a conflicting philosophy." This observation is equally applicable to the Chinese.

Kitano (1974) observes that conflict may arise when Chinese youngsters perceive the different styles of their Caucasian peers, especially the informal and casual relations between parents and children. This may cause children to wonder whether the American way is more desirable. This comparison may cause them to be ashamed of their parents, family and ethnic group when recognizing that their parents are hard-working but poor, their life styles restricted, the frugality and the limited English spoken at home. Lee (1979:66) records what a respondent said:

When you are not an European, you are nobody. It was humiliating to bring your Asian parents to school. They did not speak English fluently

and it was somehow strange . . . I felt pressure from my peers and even from my teachers. So I did not want to expose my parents to this kind of pressure.

Thoen (1982) found that inter-generational, inter-personal and intra-personal conflicts are exceptionally high in the Asian refugee family as it adjusts to a very different way of life. She further states that wife abuse and child abuse are not uncommon side effects of extended families wrestling with assimilation and acculturation issues.

One problem resulting from language and cultural adjustment is the changing roles of children and parents. Parents, who are illiterate in English are helpless in assisting their children in school work and when coming into contact with government agencies, have to rely on their children to interpret for them. As a result, there is a sense of loss of control and self-esteem for the parents on account of language deficiency. To exacerbate the problem, when the children lose the facility to speak their native language in their acculturation process, the parents faced the great possibility of losing all the cultural control over their children (McKay & Weinstein-shr,1993).

Adolescents may come into conflict with parents in love and marriage life. Parents may insist that women do not have the right to fall in love and be married without parental arrangement (Tsai, 1986). As compared to the cultural practices, a harmonious marriage will usually have the blessings of the parents and the concept of marriage to the Chinese is not only the union of two individuals, but the union of two families.

Another area of conflict can be in academic achievement where the parents would be bitterly disappointed if their children failed in school.

Reciprocally, children may also feel a sense of failure when their parents hold menial jobs (Tsai, 1986).

Gender Issues

How were the female gender treated among the Chinese community in the past, the present and in America? The attitude toward the female sex has been changing throughout history. It would be enlightening to look into the past to have a feel of the changing perspective.

Biaggio (1986) comments that the condition of women in pre-revolutionary China as one of the most oppressive societies for women, where they were viewed as inferior to men. This is due to the patriarchal tradition where only the male offspring are believed to carry the blood lineage from one generation to another, and if a family produces only female children, that particular lineage is believed to be lost forever (Lovell, 1987). The low opinion of women is even contained in the Confucianist view which compared women and people of low birth as very hard to deal with. If one were to be friendly with them, they would get out of hand, and if one kept the distance, they would resent it. In addition, according to the writings of Mencius, ascribed roles in human relationships were laid out such that between father and son there should be affection; between ruler and minister there should be righteousness; and between husband and wife there should be attention to their separate functions. Women were imposed three obediences--woman in youth should obey her father, in marriage her husband and in old age her son (Backiel, 1993). Besides these three obediences, Tsai (1986) also states that there are

four virtues whereby women are expected to follow. First is the women's ethics where she is to know her place and comply with the old ethical code; second, in speech she is expected not to talk too much; third, in appearance she is to adorn herself with a view to please the opposite sex and finally; in work she is expected to do all chores in the home. This attitude towards women is also quoted by Takaki (1989) in a Chinese proverb that says "a boy is born facing in, a girl is born facing out" (p. 36). This discriminatory practice went so far as to exclude a daughter's name from the recorded family tree. Hers was only to be found next to her husband's name in his genealogy. This placed the women in an inferior class to men, and they were expected to remain at home, attending to family and domestic responsibilities. However, with the Communist-established government many of these cultural discriminations were abolished by government edicts. Chinese women's right has improved tremendously since ancient time when women were subjected to a saying that a virtuous women never took three steps beyond the threshold to a contemporary China where Mao declared that women held up half the sky (Collesano, 1991).

The changing fortune of Chinese women prompted Peter Seybolt (1981) to note that there were no women in the world who had come so far in so short a time as had the women of China, and that there was no other country that had promoted women's liberation so vigorously today. The concept of sex parity is generally accepted by both men and women now in China. The practices of traditional cultural heritage prompted Tsai (1986) to comment that the employment patterns of Chinese American women today may have been influenced by them and that contemporary Chinese women are still predominantly interested in domestic and domestic-related jobs.

Chinese and American Gender Discrimination Compared

At present, how do Chinese females fare in comparison to the men in their community as compared to the American females? In their literature review, Bennett and Kimmel (1986), quoting from Mira Komorovski (1946) and Sadlar and Sadlar (1982), find that American women are subjected to powerful cultural contradictions. When they mature and enter adulthood, American women like to seek and gain social recognition and approbation from teachers, parents and peers for being good, neat, compliant, studious, and earning good grades. American girls discover that their academic accomplishment come into conflict and threaten those of their male classmates. American college men do not appreciate intellectual vigor and self-assertion from the women; faculty and administrators reinforce the notion of women taking a back seat to their male colleagues. As a consequence of this, research evidence from Veroff et al. (1975), shows there have been a variety of indications that American women are less achievement-oriented than American men. Martiner Horner (1972) describes the "fear of success" phenomenon among American women as the recognition that striving for success comes into conflict with affiliative needs. From her research of 13 Chinese graduate students, it was found that Chinese women exhibit higher level of personal achievement motivation than the men who are more peer-oriented. Chinese women look less toward peers than toward their families for social support. Hence, they do not have to suffer the "fear of success" syndrome and be ruled by peer influence.

In America, the Chinese women have been perceived to suffer double discrimination, first as women and then as a minority. It was termed "twice a

minority" by Takaki (1993). Many Chinese immigrant women, due to their handicap in English, found themselves working as seamstresses in the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco. It is estimated that about 45.0% of the residents of New York Chinatown do not speak English well or at all. Still, according to Kan (1990), Chinese women lag behind Chinese men in education, employment and training at the national level, and the road toward equality of the sexes and the elimination of the patriarchal ideology will have to take time to realize. However, it has also been noted by Tsai (1986) that since the enactment of the Immigrant Act of 1965, which helped altered the historically lopsided ratio between Chinese males and females, there has been a record increase in numbers of young Chinese women attending colleges and universities, as well as an increased number working outside their homes. It should also be noted that a great number of Chinese American women continue to follow the dictates of their Chinese heritage, believing that taking care of a home and educating the young are more important and rewarding than having a job or living independently. This devotion to the family accounts for the remarkable academic achievement of many Chinese students, the majority staying out of delinquency and drug problems, violence and being compliant to teacher requests.

Chinese women in America had been discriminated against, as revealed by the American Cable Act of 1922 which forbid American-born women of Asian ancestry to marry immigrant men with the threat of losing their citizenship (Chan, 1991). Subsequently, the Act was repealed in 1936. Chinese women had been discriminated by their own parents as shown in the case of Betty Lee Sung and Jade Snow Wong in terms of education and ancestral role (Takaki,

1989). Both were not given the opportunities for college education by their parents and that sons have preference over daughters.

For those Chinese women who decided to work outside their homes, how have they fared? Yamauchi (1981), in her survey of 287 Asian American women (which included Chinese women who were engaged in both traditional and non-traditional occupation in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco) found that those who held non-traditional occupations displayed a combination of Asian and American values, were more decisive and ambitious, rejected the stereotypes attributed to them by white members of society, and showed more assertive verbal behavior as well as an inclination toward more nonverbal assertive behavior.

Matsui (1988), in her qualitative research of eight students at a university, each from Japan and the People's Republic of China, found that most of the Chinese respondents said, among other things, that women are better treated in China, at least in the urban areas, than the women in America. They also found the respondents were aware of the sexist American culture where women have to play feminine by wearing make-up and womanly dresses. Most of the respondents thought that women should stay home to care for the children because it was in their nature, and finally that they preferred to be assertive in public life, but would still prefer traditional femininity such as sensitivity, mildness, gentleness, modesty and compassion in their private lives. They felt that American women lacked these qualities. The Chinese women anticipated that they would be treated equally to similarly qualified men when they returned to China, and they expected career advancement and better opportunities. In her literature review, Matsui (1988) reveals that the longer the Chinese students

stayed in the United States, the more skeptical of American values they become, feeling more negative toward American people .

Angel and Dickson (1985) in their research on Chinese college students' attitudes in Hawaii towards male/female roles, found that the traditional ideals of the patriarchal traditions wherein men had privileged roles in the family and in a society with the women's ideal place in the home still applied whenever Chinese immigrants could afford this life style. However, he also found that there was a decreasingly willingness of college students to accept this as a reason for being unemployed. His data further suggests that Chinese American couples may differ more and have more conflict over work and family roles than Japanese and other ethnic groups.

Changing Attitudes towards Chinese Women

There appears to be a change in attitude toward gender discriminations among the Chinese. This changing attitude is revealed by Backiel (1993) that "a girl is like a T-shirt, a boy like a jacket," meaning that girls are closer to parents. It has been asserted by Ann Wee (1963) that while the traditional views of a woman's place in China is changing, the lingering impact may still be held by some of the more traditional Chinese. She commented that while some of the distinctions have become blurred among the modern Chinese of South-east Asia, much of the old feelings remain. It has also been noted by Smith (1989) that boys are more sought after than daughters, though today this is less the case.

Brandon (1990) finds from an analysis of data from a longitudinal survey of students in high school and beyond, the suggestion that young Asian American females reach higher levels of educational attainment more quickly than young Asian American males, and that these differences are most noteworthy among immigrants or the children of immigrants. Another important finding is that there is no significant sex differences in educational attainment found for Asian Americans from homes where English is spoken; but, for Asian Americans whose home language is not English, a higher percentage of high-attaining females than males is found. In an effort to explain why Asian American females perform better than the Asian American males, Brandon (1990) speculates that the females may heed parental advice and suggestions more than the males; they acculturate more easily and quickly to American culture than Asian American males, and being immigrants from countries in which females' educational status is less than in the United States and in which females' educational opportunities are fewer, they are more motivated to succeed. Tsai (1986), in quoting Fong (1984) from a survey, shows that Chinese American women have higher educational aspirations and expectations than they do work aspirations. Chinese women have been found not to be so competitive in the work place as other minorities. He concludes that Chinese women still appeared unsure about combining professional employment with family life.

In the analyses of women's status with regard to earnings, occupation and education, Hu (1989) finds that the facts do not bear out the general perception that Asian women may suffer double oppression due to the fact that they are Asian and at the same time women. He found that full-time working

Asian American women earned \$11,500, 10.0% more than for white women (not taking into consideration regional income differences). He quoted another study which shows that immigrant women reach earning parity with non-immigrant women sooner than do immigrant men. The data also shows that there is a higher percentage of Asian women working full-time as compared to Whites, perhaps due to the underemployment of their husbands. In educational achievement, it was found that Asian women scored nearly the same as White males on the math section of the SAT, but were only half as likely to study engineering. Compared to white women, Asian women are three to twelve times more likely to be engineers and doctors. Asian women too are 30.0% more likely than Whites to be found in traditional female occupations, such as school teachers, librarians and secretaries. Hu (1989) raises the question as to why Asian women do so well? He attributes this to two factors. First, women in this society are somewhat better accepted than men. Typically, Asian traits such as reservation in manners and deference to authority may be interpreted as being "wimpy" in men, but they may be more favorably accepted in women, and many college admission officers seem to be acting on this assumption. Second, Asian women are far less inhibited than Western women once barriers of gender restrictions in Asia are removed and they are more likely to be taken seriously in society. Furthermore, Asian women have not been assimilated enough to be affected by the cultural checks of American norms of masculinity and femininity despite the pronouncement that men and women are equal. In reality many obstacles are placed in the path of a woman's advancement. Outlook (1989) commented that besides the Filipinas, Chinese women tend to

assume the dual role of worker and mother in the United States, which confirms that Chinese women need not have to choose between career or family.

Smith (1992) reveals that women's rights have been enhanced due to economic changes, legislation, employment opportunities and the influence of Western ideas. This includes opening educational opportunities which until quite recently were severely restricted to the female, so much so that the ratios of boys to girls attending elementary, secondary and university levels have almost reached parity. This goes to suggest a general opening for women and their breaking free from the traditional constraints of educational opportunity for women. This change in attitude is also clearly evident in other South-east Asian countries like Malaysia and Singapore.

The Model Minority

The fantastic transformation of the Chinese from laborers to high income earners, and the astounding success of the Chinese in education, appear to have taken many people by surprise. This has prompted politicians, the press and educationists to include the Chinese in the Asian model minority. In quoting Sowell (1981), Nee and Sander (1985) comment: "It is now widely recognized that Asian Americans are an exception among non-white minority groups in that they have made great strides in closing the socioeconomic gap between themselves and whites." This was helped by the wide publicity given by the mass media in the mid-sixties on the high educational attainment level of the Chinese, their high median family income, low crime rate and the absence of juvenile delinquency and mental health problems. Wong (1980), in quoting a

New York Times article, refers to the Chinese success as follows: "the pigtailed coolie has been replaced in the imagination of many American by the earnest, bespectacled young scholar." How do Chinese appear to look so successful in the eyes of others and what indicators are there to justify the success of the Chinese?

Evidence of Success

The popular image of Asian Americans as the "model minority" has been cultivated by NBC Nightly News and the McNeil/Lehrer Report in 1986, by CBS's 60 Minutes "The Model Minority" in 1987, US News and World Report "Are They Making the Grade?" in 1984, Time Magazine's "The Changing Face of America" in 1985, Newsweek's "Asian American: the Drive to Excel" in 1984 and "Asian American: A Model Minority" in 1982, Fortune's "America's Super Minority" in 1986 and New Republic's "The Triumph of Asian Americans: America's greatest success story" in 1985. This image has also been echoed by politicians to such an exaggerated degree that it has created a new myth in American society (Takaki, 1989). Tsai (1986) too portrays a picture of Chinese success in terms of excellent academic achievement, the high esteem of academic success held by American youngsters, and how Chinese have pulled themselves up from hardship and discrimination (as perceived by the general public). It has been estimated that one out of every hundred Chinese in America holds a doctorate of philosophy degree. Wilson (1991) mentions that in 1990 almost 20.0% of freshmen entering Harvard University and 25.0% at University of California, Berkeley, were Asian Americans, and that if admission

were based strictly on test scores and grade point average, the percent of Asian Americans students would be even higher.

The figures quoted by Hu (1989) are particularly persuasive but can be misleading. In 1980, when the Asian-American population was just 1.5% of the population, it comprised 5.0% of all engineers and 8.0% of all doctors in the country. Asian businesses generated more revenue nationally than any other minority group. He further states that in 1987 Asian-Americans were 13.0% of freshmen admitted to Harvard, 25.0% to University of California, Berkeley, 30.0% of entering women students at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and more than half of admitted engineering students at University of California, Berkeley. He further states that these have created resentment from those who may have judged Asians as too successful. Hirschman and Wong (1983) conclude that in the field of education, the record of Asian Americans is one of consistent over-achievement as evidenced by a report of positive classroom behavior and test scores, as well as over-representation in institutions of higher education. Steingasser (1986), too, commented that at every educational level, from middle school to graduate school, New York's Asians are more likely to be graduates or post-graduates than the rest of the city's population.

Cautions on the Accuracy of the Label

Many questions have been raised as to the veracity and accuracy of the above figures. Some consider the labelling a myth, while others condemn it as a political ploy to deny certain privileges to the Chinese. Others question the very tools that were used to measure success, such as research methodology,

definitional problems, and generalizability and consider them to be inaccurate.

Yet others allege that:

the publicity served an important political purpose at the height of the civil rights movement: proponents of the thesis were in fact telling black and Chicano activists that they should follow the example set by Asian Americans who work hard to pull themselves up by the bootstraps instead of using militant protests to obtain their rights" (Chan, 1991, p. 167).

Koyama and Lee (1989) lend support to this statement by saying that this stereotype is used as an ideological tool to assign blame for social, political and economic problems, and to deflect attention from the real issues. Furthermore, the Statement of Commissioners (Duleep, 1988) warned that the economic success of Asian Americans is still mostly unsubstantiated and the popular allegation that they are successful can only divert attention from more important structural issues like racial, gender and labor discrimination which can limit the well-being of Asian Americans despite their heavy investment in education and work experience.

Banks (1984) cautions against the emphasis on Asian American "success" because the traditional measures of success can be misleading and divert attention away from the psychological and social problems that many Asians still experience in American life. He points out the implication that:

nonwhite people can succeed in the United States only if they work hard and that if they do not it is because of their own shortcomings. Thus, when carried to its extreme, the success thesis can be used to make

invidious comparisons among ethnic minority groups and become a justification for discrimination" (p. 339).

This has been proven to be the case with college admittance for Asian Americans (D'Souza, 1991). This undesirable effect has been shown clearly by Liu and Yu (1975). In many cases, minority scholarships explicitly include blacks, Chicanos, Indians and Puerto Ricans, but give no reference to Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Filipino youths. D'Souza (1994) relates that former UC Berkeley chancellor Ira Heyman who has admitted and apologized for his university's discriminatory treatment of Asians. The Department of Education also found the University of California at Los Angeles guilty of anti-Asian policies. Harker (1994) notes that many Asian students claimed that there was a quota imposed on them and that the slots allocated based solely on academic criteria had been substantially reduced. Feinberg (1981) quotes several statements to the effect that Asians are not considered to be a minority, that it is absurd Orientals qualify for affirmative action, that several minority fellowship programs sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Science exclude Asians, that they don't need help and that they are able to do it on their own. Frank Wu (Detroit Free Press, 1987) reiterates that all the model minority image does is do more harm to Asian-Americans and

it hurts the disadvantaged more, for even those who are in the same situation as poor whites, blacks and Hispanics get little consideration for their difficulties, the assumption being that they already possess some ancient Oriental secret for leaping ahead. Asian-Americans are squeezed out as neither disadvantaged nor white enough. (p. 11A)

The very ability to make themselves productive and find success by some is considered a double-edged sword for the Chinese by Chan (1991), because "as their achievement has brought them much public acclaim, their very success is resurrecting deeply ingrained prejudices and hostility (164)." This is also supported by the Statement of Commissioners (Duleep, 1988), who states that there might be renewed hostility and resentment towards Asian Americans who are sometimes seen as foreigners taking jobs away from other Americans. As the debate on affirmative action or equal opportunity rages, Asian Americans can well do without the image of the model minority, for they see exclusion, discrimination based on race, violation of their civil rights, punishment for being diligent and the evils of decision made on race, especially for those from low and disadvantaged socio-economic status. A frightening trend has been documented by D'Souza (1991) regarding the exclusion of Chinese students from Ivy League universities based solely on race in the overzealous implementation of affirmative action programs in university admissions. The basic question of affirmative action based on race rather than on disadvantaged criteria like poverty or social status hinges on the principle of quota imposition. The classic example of Yat-Pang Au's rejection of his application to the University of California, Berkeley, is a case in point (D'Souza, 1991). A further discussion of this can be found in Mills (1992).

Barrozo (1987), in examining data from his research in 12 of California's achieving compensatory educational schools, as well as the findings of the California State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific Islanders Affairs, also presents two views on the "model minority." He said that the label may promote a positive self-image for Asians but at the same time do damage

by misleading policymakers into thinking that Asians are free from educational problems. He also indicated that there is a growing concern that Asians' low verbal scores are masked by their higher than average math scores and high school grade point average. This would certainly mislead one to conclude that they encountered no problems. The educational problems cited include the lack of qualified bilingual teachers and administrators to serve the needs of Chinese limited English proficiency students. Teachers who are devoted and culturally sensitive range from "little" to "moderate", and there is a lack of multicultural instructional materials. Besides this, Chinese students' self-esteem were shattered with the experience of Galileo High School students in San Francisco, where their cultural value have been despised when they were given numbers to substitute for their names because some insensitive teachers found difficulty pronouncing their names (Tsai, 1986). Barrozo (1987) concludes that Asian students should not be penalized for having what they have to begin with, that is, their culture.

The misleading perception that Chinese have no problems is especially convincing in that academic achievement among the Chinese are camouflaged by the phenomenon of bimodality. It is clearly explained in Chang (1992) that the model minority thesis imposes on itself the singular focus on the success of some Chinese Americans, while neglecting the persistence of serious economic hardship among other Chinese Americans. He postulated that a selective immigration policy of admitting highly educated immigrants to meet the needs of our high technology industries creates the presence of a class of highly trained professionals existing side by side with a class of low-skilled

occupations in the restaurant, garment and other low-paid service industries. This gave rise to the bimodality among the Chinese.

Myth or Reality?

Facts and figures do not tell the whole truth. It is no wonder that many people are very susceptible to stereotyping all Asia-Americans in general as successful and in particular, Chinese Americans. Figures often quoted pertain to Asian-Americans, a term which sometimes is meaningless when reference is made to a particular ethnic Asian and secondly, if occupation figures are quoted, it should not be selective--all occupation figures should be given to provide a balanced view. Dinh (1994) feels that there is an insidious effect of the Asian model minority myth as it masks the variety of Asian community; that Asians make up a disproportionate percentage of America's academic and economic elite is only partly true.

Koyama and Lee (1989) asserts that when the data and research studies were reviewed, they did not support the assertion that Asian Americans are uniformly successful because of the following reasons. First, there is a false homogeneity in the Asian American population in terms of socio-economic status, ethnic background, and nativity; second, there is an overemphasis on prosperous Asian Americans which ignores the large number who live in poverty or suffer from discrimination; third, when successful Asian Americans are compared in terms of education and occupation with their white American counterparts, Asian Americans are worse off.

One particular area that is of special importance in the field of education is the number of Asian teachers where the number is so miniscule that it cannot even constitute any percentage figure (NEA Today, 1993). However, there are questions whether this image of success is appropriate at all.

In quoting Park (1990), Siu (1992) contends that the definition of "achievement" has to be taken into account. If achievement is defined as the current status, then educational achievement is a reality; however, if it is defined as progress made, then it is difficult to conclude. The truth behind the statistics was seldom told. For instance, Hsu (1971) points out that a magazine depicted two Chinese Nobel Prize winners as evidence of success; however, the truth is that the winners were born and raised in China, earned their bachelor's degrees from a Chinese university before coming to America for post-graduate studies. This was never told. He further states that nearly all Chinese scholars and most Chinese professionals in America today were born, raised and educated to the bachelor-degree level in mainland China or Taiwan. This was also confirmed by Tsang and Wing (1985). Kan (1984) also asserts that the drastic increase in educational attainment for Asian American between 1970-1980 came not solely from the higher achievement of the groups within a single decade, but from the highly selective immigration of professionals who are well educated. Siu (1992), in referring to Chang (1983), reaches a similar conclusion that the overall positive picture of the education of Chinese-Americans has been a function more of the very high level of education of new immigrants than of any unusually rapid progress made by the veteran Chinese settlers. Kwong (1987) supports this stand by quoting the statistics of the Westinghouse Science Talent Search which had nine Asians out of 40 winners.

Out of the nine, five were Taiwanese and six students had parents who were research scientists, college professors or physicians.

To disprove the rosy picture, Hu (1989) analyzes the higher household income figures of Asians, stating they are due to the fact that most Chinese are residing in urban areas with corresponding high costs of living, which inflates the income figure. Chan (1991) and Commission on Civil Rights (1980) report support this simple fact, stating that more than half the Asian/Pacific American population lives in only five metropolitan areas--Honolulu, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. It is true that these areas are high income areas, but it is also true that they are high cost of living areas. Hence, while they are shown to have earned more, the fact that they have to spend more is not mentioned. Nee and Sanders (1985) also reveal that the reported earnings of Asian Americans, compared to Whites, is an artifact of the concentration of Chinese in states where earnings are unusually high relative to Whites who reside in states where earnings are typically lower. This results in a false impression of higher earnings for Asian Americans. Inclusive in the Statement of Commissioners in a report by the Commission on Civil Rights (Duleep, 1988) it is stated that by using a nationwide sample without adequate control for regional differences can confound analyses, such as those of income. If earning differences are properly controlled for by area, much of the alleged earnings advantage of Asian families would be much less and the advantage is traceable to larger number of earners.

Other factors are cited to show that the rosy picture painted of the high earnings of Asian families are not accurate, like the use of "predicted" earnings

rather than real earnings or the report is based only on one theoretical framework for assessing economic inequality, that is, the assimilation model.

Furthermore, the higher figure is due to the greater number of people working and staying as extended families. Suzuki (1983) pointed out that when the income figures for Asia-Pacific Americans were adjusted for demographic variables like education, age, geographic location and hours worked per week, it is found that they are earning considerably less than their White counterparts.

The Commission on Civil Rights (1980) found that although many Asian Americans may have high levels of education, they not always have high-paying jobs. It was also found by Wong (1980) that there is considerable evidence that Asian Americans are excluded from certain occupations and encounter difficulties in obtaining promotions.

The hidden truth was also commented on by Chan (1991) in her analysis on the US Census Bureau's report on Chinese earnings that it failed to reveal for 60% of Japanese and Chinese families, more than one person worked, which helped to account for their higher family income. If per capita income rather than family income had been used, then Chinese Americans were making considerably less than the national average. Duleep (1988) has also reported that wives and other family members supplement family income of Asian families. The average income of Asian males is found to be lower than White males with a comparable education. Wong (1980), in analyzing the figures for the 1970 Census, found that Chinese males with four or more years of college education were earning 74.0% of the average income of white males. A study of American born men in California found for each additional year of education, Whites earned \$522.00 more as compared to \$320.00 for the

Chinese. Absent from mention was the fact that fully 25% of all gainfully employed Chinese men were in low-status and low-income occupations like cooks, waiters, busboys, dishwashers and janitors (Chan, 1991). She further states that Asian American income is still 10.0% lower than for average White.

The low unemployment figures of Chinese population, instead of being presented as proof of their economic well-being, camouflage higher under-employment, as the Chinese worker would rather hold low-paid, part-time or seasonal jobs than be on public welfare. To conclude, Chan (1991) states that there is a lack of consensus on the current socio-economic status of Asian American because of methodological differences and different theoretical models used to analyze data.

Hirschman and Wong (1983) commented that contrary to popular image, Asian Americans have not achieved equality in all spheres of American society. Their record of occupation and earnings is positive relative to other minorities, but still short of full parity with the White population. Kan's (1984) analysis of the 1980 Census Report finds that the educational advantage of Asian American does not necessarily imply economic advantage, as commonly assumed. Reports based on the 1976 Survey of Income and Education have shown that for Japanese and Chinese Americans, occupational returns for their educational achievement are lower than that of Whites. Besides the differentials in earnings obtained, Tsai (1986) quotes a survey by AT&T for the years between 1972-1976, showing that Whites took a median of nine years to reach supervisory jobs while for the Chinese, it took 12 years.

Kan (1984) further reveals that Chinese have a higher percentage of families below the poverty line as compared with the Whites (15.7% of Chinese

families with school-age children remain below the poverty level, compared to 10.0% of white families). Chan and Tsang (1983) said that median income for Chinese Americans shows a slightly higher level than the median family income for the total US population, but this is not a good measure. A better measure would be the median income per capita within a household, and according to the US Commission on Civil Rights report of 1978, the median household income per capita for a Chinese family was 11.0% less than it was for a household headed by White males. Correspondingly, the figure generated by using income per capita would indicate that Chinese were 1.89 times more likely to be living in poverty than families headed by White males. Outlook (1989) found that poverty affected one in six Chinese during 1980.

In a study by Toupin and Son (1991) to test the presumed validity of the model minority stereotype of Asian Americans, they discovered that Asian-American students faced a considerable difficult time in college as measured by the significant numbers who failed to graduate, who had lower GPAs and who were more likely to be placed on academic probation as well as the large number who withdrew or were withdrawn for medical reasons. The researchers concluded that their findings raise serious questions concerning the view of Asian Americans as the model minority. Besides this, the Commission on Civil Rights (1980) states that, in spite of the picture of success of Asian Americans, there are a disproportionately large number of some groups who have almost no formal education. Outlook (1989), in analyzing the problem faced by Asian Americans in the tri-state regions of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, finds that a vast majority of Asian American children face language difficulties in the classroom; many have parents who are non-English speaking and cannot

help with homework. There is a terrible shortage of Chinese-speaking bilingual teachers and counselors. Takaki (1989) has also noted that in 1980, population data show that the Chinese community had been transformed from 61.0% American-born to 63.0% foreign born, making the community mainly an immigrant one. It can be expected that the need for bilingual education in schools is greater than ever.

Hu (1989) asserts that the model minority thesis is a myth. He analyzes the situation from an economic viewpoint, as that of a "double" minority, which happens only among the Asian-Americans. By this he means that there is a privileged "overminority" and a disadvantaged "underminority." How does this "bipolarity" come about? It is a combination of using a single average figure which balances out the high and low incomes and the history of immigration of people with different socio-economic levels. Hence, statistically, Asians are both wealth and poor. Quoting figures from the National Committee on Pay Equity, Hu states that Asians are three to five times as likely as Whites to be engineers and doctors, but two to four times as likely to be working long hours for low pay in sweatshops or restaurants. Specifically, Chinese adults (90.0%) nationally speak their ancestral language, and nearly one-third had difficulty with English, inferring that many were disqualified from mainstream jobs because of language handicaps. The difficulties of lower income families in Chinatowns are often not depicted by the media, and Tsai (1986) mentions large numbers of workers, especially women, who work in urban ghettos in overcrowded sweatshops and are non-English-speaking eking out minimum or substandard wages. Their hardships include living in subsistence housing, children suffering from malnutrition, and children attended by elder siblings or

even unattended because both parents work. These facts contradict the "successful image" of the Chinese, but are not popularized by the press.

The "dual minority" phenomenon is also evident in the educational arena. Although one-third of Asian-Americans adults have completed a college education, double that of Whites, 6.0% have not even completed elementary school education, which is triple the rate of Whites based on the 1980 Census (Hu, 1989). Kan and Liu (1986) find that Chinese Americans have a high proportion of their population with minimum or no education. Asian students received 19.0% of the highest SAT scores in 1988, but they also represents 14.0% of the worst SAT scores, primarily because of poor verbal performance. What many publishers did not publish was that the average verbal score of one-quarter of Asian students who speak English as a second language was worse than that of black students at any income level. Hence, not all Asian students are star performers. Siu (1992) relates that Park (1990) has indicated that this bipolarity is especially extreme for Chinese-Americans and is manifested in several ways, by age, country of origin, and current geographical area of residence. Kwong (1987), as quoted by Siu (1992), divides Chinese into two distinct groups, called "uptown Chinese" and "downtown Chinese," each comprising roughly 30% of the Chinese-American population. The "uptown" Chinese represent entrepreneurs or professionals living outside Chinatown who possess high incomes, higher education than the national average and tend to come from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The "downtown" Chinese are comprised of manual and service workers, are recent immigrants who speak little or no English, lack a high school diploma from their homeland and live in Chinatowns. The differential economic and social hardships and educational

problems faced by the "downtown" Chinese in New York have been documented by Chao (n.d.). Wong (1988), in discussing the English proficiency of Chinese Americans, warns against making generalizations based on place of origin and length of residence in America without taking into account their socio-economic background and the types of school they attended. Chinese immigrants from the elite class may be better in English than San Francisco's Chinatown residents. Tsang and Wing (1985) also point out that while the average Asian American student does appear to be doing well, those who are recent immigrant or whose best language is not English may be experiencing problems.

The important question here is, do Asian-Americans deserve special consideration? Advocates for representation will want Asians in the field of education to reflect the diversity of the population, but reality is far different. In fact, the number of Chinese students at the University of California, Berkeley, is fewer than at any time before 1975 due to unfair and unofficial quotas (Hu, 1989). Suzuki (1983) states that it should be readily apparent that the "model minority" image of Asian Americans is inaccurate, misleading and a gross overgeneralization. While it is true that many Asian Americans have attained some measure of success, the fact remains that there is still a far larger population who are poor.

Kitano (1974) warns that to assume that "all Asians have made it" will only add to their discontent. Unless some attention is paid to their needs and problems, yet another group will face the discrepancy between American ideals and racial realities.

In their report, the Commission on Civil Rights (1980), states that the belief that Asian Americans are a successful minority who no longer suffer from disadvantage is not supported by facts. In fact, the perception of the successful "model minority" is an artifact propagated via misinformation from certain interest groups in the 1960s, who focused their attention on the small group which is successful and ignoring the other less successful group, including the illiterate, the underemployed, and those with comparable levels of education who are earning less than the majority population. The underemployment of recent Chinese immigrants, called "occupational downgrading," is related by Takaki (1989), wherein doctors, teachers, professors, accountants, architect and engineers in their land of origin were found to be qualified to hold only jobs such as janitors, draftsmen, seamstresses, librarians, or floor workers in electronic factories. This is due to their language problems, a fear of competing vigorously in the American job market and the "exploitation" of their labor due to discrimination. Takaki (1993) questions the continued perception of the Asian American as "model minority" despite the fact that the myth has been challenged. Takei (1981) asserts that further evidence is needed to show that the rate of upward mobility for Asian Americans exceeds that of US-born children of immigrants of other ethnic group who were comparable to the Asian immigrants in terms of time of arrival, geographical residence, socio-economic background and others before we can accept the proposition that the Chinese and Japanese American experienced extraordinary socio-economic success in this country. As at present he called the Chinese and Japanese model minority a myth. Hsia (1988) revealed that the Asian Americans have disclaimed their new label as the model minority.

Contributory Factors Towards the Model Minority Status

What then are some of the contributory factors towards the much touted Chinese achievement in academic fields? Some would like to believe that the Chinese have a higher innate intelligence, as mentioned in the controversial book, *The Bell Curve* by Murray and Herrnstein or the biological deficiency theory propounded by Jensen and shown by the "flawed" research of Lynn; others would quote the cultural deficiency theories of Daniel Moynihan and Edward Banfield; or the bias theory of Gunnar Myrdal where he argues that prejudice and discrimination are the causes of racial disparity. Ogbu's arguments seem to go along the same line as Gunnar Myrdal.

Steinberg (1981) has presented very interesting facts on the ethnic myth about the success of certain groups based on a combination of historical, cultural, societal, discriminatory, and economic factors to explain some ethnic success. It appears that there is no conclusive evidence that can pinpoint one particular factor to account for the academic success of a particular ethnic group. It has also been reviewed widely by Siu (1992) on the question of Chinese-American educational achievement, which presents both the myths and realities of the situation. As stated by Steinberg (1981), on the myth of ethnic success, "Issue arises not with the fact of ethnic success, but with the theories advanced to explain it."

Some forwarded the cultural hypothesis and in their research (Stevenson et al. 1990), in comparing the academic achievements of their sampled Chinese students in Taipei, Taiwan, Japanese students in Sendai, Japan and American students in Minneapolis metropolitan area, they found that cultural factors may

be mediating factors that contribute to academic success, though not as causal factors. Relevant cultural aspects include great emphasis on academic achievement among the Chinese, and hence more time and activities are engaged in academic related matters. When compared to American children, Chinese students were found to like schools in spite of overcrowding classroom, large class, long hours large amount of homework. Emphasis on group participation in the education of Chinese children involves family, teachers and significant others, and the students working hard not only for themselves but also for their families. Their individual success is the success of the group. Chinese believe that achievement is a result of effort while American believe it is ability. Chinese parents were found to be more critical of their children's education while American parents were more positive and enthusiastic about their children's education despite their lower academic achievement. It appears that the results of this study can be supported by Lamborn et al. (1991), who find that adolescents who describe their parents as authoritarian do well in school and are less likely than their peers to be involved in deviant activities.

Schneider and Lee (1990) and Tsai (1986) found the combination of socio-cultural factors and micro-level interpersonal interactions as an important link to the success of East Asian students in American schools. This encompasses high expectations of self, parents, teachers and peers, a culture which places high value on scholarship and filial piety to the parents, reaction to discriminatory practices, and personal characteristics like industriousness, quietness, organized and respectful.

Nee and Sanders (1985) comment that an important debate is going on as to whether Asian American academic attainment is decisively caused by cultural or structural factors. Some draw a parallel between Asian cultural values and Protestant ethics similar to the white middle class. This attribution of cause has been criticized by sociologists who are more sensitive to the historical and structural explanations of socioeconomic mobility. Cloud (1991), in citing a research study by Bullivant (1988) of immigrant students inclusive of Chinese students in Australia, finds that ethnic and cultural differences complemented by socio-economic status can be used to explain student achievement in an academic, examination-oriented education system. He also finds that those Chinese students acculturated to Australian society who have picked up negative values had declining academic achievement.

Siu (1993), in her case study (which is part of a five-year project on how families from different ethnic backgrounds promote academic achievement), reveals how Chinese American parents enhance the school success of their children. The education of Ivan Chan was shown to be a family affair--that of the father, mother and grandparents. Other supportive activities include parental high expectations that were conveyed to the child; monitoring of home work and the provision of extra academic exercises in addition to school homework. The mother's belief in persistent effort and innate ability as contributing to academic success. The belief that success comes from hard work was also related by Smith (1992:37). He notes that Chinese believe "success in life was closely related to academic achievement and hard work."

Vernon (1982), in explaining Chinese academic success, stresses the family upbringing which involves an adherence to accepted conventions of

social behavior; cohesion not only within a family, but also with kin and family ancestors; discouragement of egocentricity and a recognition of obligations to others; loyalty and obedience to the authorities, employers and the state; motivation for educational achievement from first entering school until maturity; firm control, not permissiveness from about three years upwards and the need for hard work to gain success and to honor the family.

Chen and Uttal's (1988) research on cultural values and educational attainment of Chinese students concludes that the emphasis of Chinese parents is on high achievement. It was found that that strong emphasis is not perceived as a source of stress by Chinese children. Chinese mothers (66.0%) believe that teachers more than parents will determine student achievement as compare to only 19.0% of American women surveyed. Schneider and Lee (1990) have also found that East Asian parents have higher expectations and are less satisfied with their children's grades than Anglo parents.

Feinberg (1981) cites several reasons why Asians excel in school. They do more homework and take more challenging courses; parental expectations are higher; parental devotion and attention to children is present; they work hard and are disciplined; their parents urge them to do well in school; and parental satisfaction from children's academic success. He then compared the reasons as enumerated by the students to those cited by historians and sociologists for their success: high value placed on scholarship in Asian society; a strong family structure to transmit this value and the history of discrimination against Asians in the United States which has resulted in their stressing education as an open channel to high-status jobs and acceptance. Tsang and Wing (1985)

consider the time spent on learning as an influential factor toward academic success.

Hirshman and Wong (1983) comment that the explanation regarding high educational achievement of Asian-American has been varied, conflicting and always subject to debate, and that it is difficult to assert a cause-and-effect relationship. They suggest that immigration policies may have had a major impact in the educational success, such as a more selective admittance of higher socio-economic Chinese and their investment in their children's education. Moore and Stanley (1987), in their research on Asian Americans who reason extremely well mathematically, comment that ability, ambition and willingness to work hard is helping to set higher level and faster pace of educational attainment in the United States, especially of female students. They are also from highly educated families and apparently have enjoyed excellent heredity and environment, plus the high level of academic and professional motivation common to first generation Americans from such backgrounds. Education, too, has been perceived as a channel of social mobility. Besides this, Lee (1979) mentioned that from numerous surveys, it was found Asian immigrants indicate that better education for children was one of the principal motives for their emigration, and education here is defined as learning of academically oriented subjects.

Erickson (1987) also discusses the genetic deficit, cultural deficit and politics in an effort to explain school achievement or failure. Briefly, genetic deficit implies that "poor children of color or of minority culture or language background have been seen as inherently inferior, intellectually and morally, to the children of the middle class." Cultural deficit sees nurture, in contrast to

nature, as the main reason for school success or failure. This entails the absence of a cognitively stimulating environment where language and life-styles are intellectually impoverished in a culturally deprived or socially disadvantaged situation. The writer examines two other theses of school failure as the communication process explanation and perceived labor market explanation. The former implies that the cultural, verbal and nonverbal communication styles of teachers and students differ to such an extent that they cause alienation of the students toward school, resulting in a conflict situation. The latter explanation, attributed by John Ogbu as the main reason for the low school achievement of many minority students in the United States, is that students, their parents and peers are "convinced that school success will not help them break out of a cycle of poverty that they attribute to the racism that is endemic in American society." These students are characterized as a "castellike" minority to be distinguished from the immigrant minority students who do not seem to be overcome by these two problems, as the latter are "much more optimistic about their life chances in American society," in that they "believe that effort devoted to school success is likely to pay off in future employment." Hence, they "persist in their school work, encouraged in this by their parents, and this persistence accounts for their school success." Erickson (1987) concludes that both explanations have their problems and advances the perspective of the resistance theory, whereby the concept of legitimacy, trust and interest are crucial to school success. He also quotes Ogbu's portrayal of the blacks' cultural differentiation of using derogatory terms like "acting white" or "oreos" on their own kind in order to bring down those who are academically more successful. In light of these explanations, it is apparent that Chinese

immigrants do not have to contend with such problems. Ogbu (1990) comments that the Chinese take the line of least resistance by emphasizing high value for education, being industrious and having a desire for advancement bred in their Chinese cultural roots which position them to look for avenues of success like going for professional jobs, business or trusted bureaucrats. It was observed by Guthrie (1985) that recent Chinese immigrants do not perceive learning English as necessarily giving up their native language or culture, and that the most important objective is for their children to acquire English proficiency as a tool for success in the wider society.

Hacker (1994), in referring to the analysis of Asian immigrants academic achievements that surpassed native residents, comments that hard work and ambition still pay off for them. Besides these, there is another factor at work, that being many recent Asian immigrants are from the middle class in their countries of origin and they brought with them the values that account for their success.

Kan (1984) provides three explanations of the high-achievement behavior of Asian American children in schools in his updated analysis of the educational status of Asian American based on the 1980 Census Report as:

- a) most Asian children come from highly educated families with considerable resources for children to be familiar with educational tools, particularly computers;
- b) all immigrant children are characterized by the "immigrant" rigor when the aspiration level is raised by the knowledge of other people's success stories; and

c) quoting Candill's (1962) thesis, that high scholastic achievement comes from a sense of guilt over the sacrifice of parents, a thesis which had been repeatedly confirmed by other researchers.

One interesting observation that Kan (1984) made based on the findings of Strodbeck (1958) is that the superior school achievement of Asian American school children is not associated with their economic milieu. Lee (1979) has also made this observation. Vernon (1982) reveals that several researchers noted that Chinese students were from working or lower-middle class families, and yet their children consistently score as high academic achievers. He again quotes another unpublished study suggesting that Chinese parental socio-economic status gives very low correlations with intelligence or achievement.

There is another possibility why the Chinese pursue education in America with a single-minded tenacity--as a reaction to discrimination and rejection by the mainstream population. There is a psychological desire to show that despite this rejection, the Chinese must prove that they can excel in certain pursuit, as reflected in the response of subjects in the study by Guthrie (1985) and in Takaki (1989:255) where a respondent answered, "Yes, legally you are American, but you will not be accepted . . . But don't worry, just show them how smart you are because you have a superior heritage." Chinese children have been instructed to absorb the abuse and to concentrate on their studies so that they will not be victimized by racism, as expressed in these words: "If you cannot be better than they (Whites) are, try to be their equal anyway." In a similar vein, Tsai (1986) also refers to the educational discrimination of the past, like the 1926 California Education code that prohibited the admittance of Chinese or Mongolian children into public schools.

The reaction to this was the Chinese community's obsession with education and a strong emphasis for the need of their children to become high achievers.

It was stated by (Takei, 1981) that most first generation Chinese born in the United States learn the English language, do fairly well in school and enter occupations which are of higher status than their parents, and with these advantages acquired they pass on to their children (which their parents were unable to do). These benefits, together with the small number of Chinese-American children present prior to 1965, probably served to promote their supervision by the adults in the community, thereby reducing opportunities to become delinquents as well as giving social and emotional support for doing well in school. This helped to popularize the myth that the Chinese were a "model minority." Wright (1983), in researching the Orientals' educational achievements in Hawaii, provides some speculative explanation, that being the parents were able to control their children's behavior as well as the high aspirations they have for their children. In quoting Odo (1973), Takei (1981) state that it is also ironic that their social rejection by non-Asians probably contributes to their academic attainment to the extent that their social isolation excludes them from adolescent subcultures which denigrated academic achievement.

To put the whole debate of pinpointing what contributes to the academic success of Chinese students in American schools, Chan and Tsang (1983) conclude by saying that the Chinese in America represent a changing and complex ethnic group whose learning styles, motivation, aspirations and accomplishments are not easy to stereotype and are not yet completely illuminated. Hence, it would be very misleading to conclude that all Chinese

students are doing well in school and they do not need any help. It has to be strongly emphasized that there is a bimodal Chinese population in this society, and one has to be careful in discussing the so-called "success" of the Chinese. Sue and Okazaki (1990), in their analysis of data and review of literature toward an explanation on the Asian American educational achievements, conclude that there is no evidence to support an hereditary factor, that cultural factors may partly explain the success; they in turn suggest that relative functionalism in education is functional for upward mobility, and also should be considered. In fact, the following implications were drawn from their analysis: there are low correlations between cultural values and achievements; there are wide differences among the Asian Americans; the part played by perceptions, expectancies and beliefs over opportunities for areas of mobility may be important; finally, Asian Americans are still a minority group despite their being well educated, which has been claimed by some to have disqualified the Asian American.

Impact of the "Model Minority" Label

The "model minority" label impacts Chinese individuals differently; some may revel in the honor, some may be angered and frustrated by such stereotyping, while some of the more politically astute are aware of the political and social underpinnings of such a label. One reaction, as related by some high school students, is that Chinese have been stereotyped as excelling in mathematics. This had a reverse reaction for some students who feel they should purposely do badly in this subject in order to disprove the stereotype.

Feinberg (1981) discusses the impact of the "model minority" on the Chinese by quoting one of his respondents: "You get the feeling that they weren't interested in me because I'm me but because I'm a minority. . . they treated me as if I was handicapped. It never occurred to me that I was handicapped because I was Chinese."

Liu and Yu (1975) revealed that there is a new "third culture" among the Asian American youths. Some of them, tired of living up to the expectations of a "model minority," unimpressed by the passivity and timidity of their parents, proud of their heritage and yet reaching into their Asian roots in order to give new meanings to their existence, have created new symbols for themselves.

According to the Commission on Civil Rights (1980), the widely held stereotype of Asian American success seems to have led to official neglect of Asian American problems. Tsang and Wing (1985) state that this perceived success can lead to the assumption that Asian Americans have no educational problems that need remediation and secondly, the search for ways to improve the educational system will be benefitted by an understanding of Asian American students. In the everyday practical need, they found that a substantial proportion of those Asian Americans who are limited-English proficient are not receiving any language assistance. This was considered a matter of major concern because those who are limited-English proficient and those who experienced English problems may be large in proportion.

Koyama and Lee (1989) reveal that at the practical or program level, this label prevents policy and decision makers from recognizing individuality and diversity among Asian Americans and the various problems they encounter, such as social, language and cultural transition problems. They are perceived

to have no need for special academic or other assistance; as a result, inadequate resources are devoted to this population and many of their problems are ignored. Furthermore, from the viewpoint of the Asian American students themselves, they have been blamed for "inflating" the curve, thus making it harder for other students to compete. This negatively affects their quality of life.

Summary

As elicited from the review of literature on the contributory factors that account for the Chinese American academic "success," one has to be extremely cautious in assigning causes that bring about success, for success is an interplay of factors like history, economics, culture, individual personality and motivation, law, and politics. Whatever the contributory factors, they seem to have worked for a certain segment of the Chinese American student population, leaving an equal proportion struggling in America. Many have rejected the blanket term as applying to all Chinese Americans. It is hoped the brief discussion of the literature review will set the stage for the subsequent data analysis of three cases of Chinese who migrated to the United States of America from Malaysia. Aspects of culture, education, achievement, gender, acculturation, and the concept of model minority will be explored with the participants.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Perspective

The phenomenon of the Chinese diaspora all over the world has occurred since early times. However, their immigration into the United States has occurred fairly recently, from the late 1800s, and many historical records of the migration are fairly accessible. The stream of Chinese immigration has been flowing with starts and stops right from this early date, the toll of human suffering depicted in the documentary "Separate Lives, Broken Dreams" (KQED) has seldom been told. On the contrary, what has been depicted of the Chinese as a success story (the "model minority") has been widely publicized, giving a false impression that all Chinese have "arrived" and are at par with the mainstream European-Americans. What this false impression, created by the mass media and politicians, wittingly or unwittingly, has inflicted is a great injustice to the hardships, psychological sufferings, sacrifices, humiliation, tears and toils of disadvantaged and poor Chinese. Often forgotten in this stereotyping of the Chinese is that there are different groups of Chinese, with varied incomes, educational levels, English proficiency, countries of origin, lengths of residence, types and levels of skills, and past social and political experiences. Three cases comprising eight respondents were selected in an attempt to capture their early experiences in their country of origin, their immigration, adjustment to a new society and culture and the prospect of an

uncertain future. All their feelings and inner thoughts cannot be captured in an objective questionnaire or a quantitative interview schedule. Only the procedures of qualitative research are able to do justice to the rich experiences of the participants.

Sampling

Three cases comprising eight participants were selected for this study. Purposive sampling of Chinese immigrants from Malaysia was carried out as the general population of these sample was small. Participants were from the same country of origin as this researcher. The rationale for the choice of participants from Malaysia was that the researcher was familiar with the social, political, cultural, economic and historical experiences of the participants, having been a second generation-born in that country. The researcher was able to foster in-depth connections with the participants when they relate their experiences and, where possible and appropriate, brought about a "fusion of horizons." There was a greater understanding and empathy for their experiences as related by the participants. However, extra precautions were taken to avoid cross contamination among participants in each case through reminders after each interview session not to discuss among themselves. The researcher was conscious in maintaining a certain degree of detachment so as to avoid imposing his experiences and making unwarranted assumptions when recording and analyzing the data.

Subjects

A case consisted of one or both parents, and one high school or college student. The first case consisted of Mr. K, Mrs. K and their son, Elwin; the second consisted of Mrs. T and her son, Wern; and the third consisted of Mr. L, Mrs. L and their son, Chee. The first two cases were recent immigrants who arrived five years ago, while the third case participants immigrated 13 years ago. All three student participants had experienced both Malaysian and American schooling.

Background of Subjects.

All of the respondents were Malaysian by nationality and Chinese by ethnicity. The eight respondents consisted of five adults (two fathers and three mothers) and three adolescent males. It was a coincidence that no female adolescents were interviewed as all the first-born were males and they had the most experience in both countries.

All of the adult respondents were either first or second generation-born in Malaysia. Their forefathers were immigrants from the southern provinces of Kwangtung and Fujian in China. All of them experienced varying degree of poverty and economic hardship at certain points in their lives in Malaysia. The respondent that lived under the worst economic conditions was Mr. K, while the most economically secure was Mrs. T, although all respondents belonged to the lower-middle or lower socio-economic status. All of the adult respondents managed to move themselves up to the middle-middle class in Malaysia,

primarily through their education and self-reliance prior to migrating to the United States.

All of the adult respondents were "pioneers" in their families to be educated in English as all their forefathers were educated in Chinese. Generally speaking, all the adult respondents did not enjoy the privilege of parental assistance in their academic work. The success that they achieved in Malaysia was partly through their own diligence and partly through the assistance from teachers and older siblings. Community resources and social capital were very much lacking during their school years. However, despite the inability of parents to guide them in English, they were fortunate that most of their parents' own life experiences, wisdom, attitude toward learning and scholarship and Confucianist philosophy were transmitted directly or indirectly through informal education at home. They acquired a healthy respect for education, filial piety, cultural identity and self-sacrifice for the future well-being of their children through such process.

All of the adolescent respondents were born in Malaysia and had their education in the elementary schools before migrating here. Elwin migrated to the United States when he was about 11 years old, Wern about 12 years old and Chee when he was 7 years old.

Educational Background

All adult respondents were educated in Malaysia in the English-medium missionary schools except for Mr. K, who had his elementary education in the Chinese-medium school. Both of the adult male respondents received a

college education while the female respondents received only high school and preuniversity education. This was not necessarily the result of gender discrimination in the case of Mrs. K and Mrs. T because their parents were willing to allow them to pursue higher education. Rather, it was due to the policy of imposing a racial quota that limited Mrs. T and Mrs. K from further education. Mrs. L did not want to pursue a higher education.

When they immigrated to the United States, the adult respondents did not pursue further education because it was not economical for them to do so. Mr. and Mrs. K took several professional courses at a community college but terminated their efforts after realizing that they could not afford to spend the time, money and effort. Mrs. T took some courses in early childhood education at a community college to fulfil the requirement for a job in a day-care center, but terminated her schooling soon after the minimum units were obtained. There were several reasons for their decision. First, they preferred to spend the money on their children's education. Second, they needed to earn income for daily survival. Third, the monetary returns from certain occupations did not justify the financial outlay. Fourth, their age was a factor. Mr. and Mrs. L did not feel a need for academic pursuit.

All of the adolescent respondents received part of their education in Malaysia. Wern had six years of elementary and secondary education, Elwin had four years of elementary education, and Chee had less than one year of elementary education in Malaysia. Elwin and Wern received their elementary education in the Chinese-medium schools while Chee received his in a Malay-medium school. Elwin had five years of Chinese education in Malaysia, Wern had four years, and Chee had none. All the adolescent respondents seemed

to possess many Chinese cultural traits, such as being filial, having respect for elders, valuing parental authority, education, sacrifice and close family bonding.

While in America, Elwin and Chee encountered some difficulties in learning their English initially due to their limited exposure to the English language. Wern did not face this problem because he had been exposed to English from his parents and has one and a half years of an English-medium education in Malaysia before migrating. However, through diligence and parental support, Elwin and Chee managed to exit from ESL to regular mainstream classes after one year of instruction.

At present, Elwin is in high school, Wern in the University of California, Berkeley and Chee in the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Working Background

Three out of the four adult respondents had working careers in Malaysia, with Mr. L and Mrs. T in government service, working in a regional port authority and in a public school respectively. Mr. L worked for a private manufacturing company. The former respondents were subjected to greater race-based policy of the government than the latter, because it was most convenient for the government to dictate the hiring, training and promotion in this sector. It was more difficult for the government to impose racial quotas in the private sector. They were all considered professionals in Malaysia. Mrs. K and Mrs. L were full-time homemakers and did not experience the discriminatory employment policy. However, they could not escape broad race-based socio-economic policies.

After arriving in the United States, the adult respondents attempted to seek employment in their area of experience and expertise. However, Mr. K could not find employment in a port authority and had to work as a handyman for the first few years, and currently owns a store that sells second-hand goods. Mr. L continued to work for the semi-conductor firm he was with in Malaysia for the first few years after immigration to America. He had since resigned from this semi-conductor firm and is currently managing his own firm dealing in manufactured semi-conductor products and business consultancy services. Mrs. T is at present working for a day-care center. Mrs. K had also become economically active assisting her husband in managing their business. Mrs. L has started work in the past year, working for a private firm and later for her husband.

Socio-economic Status

Before migration, all the respondents belonged to the middle class in Malaysia. Initially, all of them experienced a down-grading of their socio-economic status. Case 1 and Case 2 respondents are presently in the lower-middle class while Case 3 respondents, who had a longer history of migration, have moved up to the upper middle group. All the respondents regard the amount of income earned as a yardstick of measurement for their social class standing. Their quality of life had improved somewhat due to the availability of many public social services which were unavailable in Malaysia.

Data Collection

A qualitative research approach was followed and data collection was effected through telephone and face-to-face interviews with the participants on multiple occasions. Case 1 participants (Mr. & Mrs. L and Elwin) and Chee Barbara, respectively. Mr. and Mrs. L were interviewed on the telephone due to the difficulties of scheduling face-to-face interviews. Case 2 participants were interviewed face-to-face on three separate occasions. After transcription of the data was completed, a copy was sent to each participant for review of accuracy, correction, additions or deletions. Prior to sending typed transcriptions, clarifications were also done through the telephone.

A combination of tape-recordings and field note-taking were used to collect the data.

The main instrument for data collection consisted of a structured and open-ended interview schedule with all the participants. Interview questions were pilot tested with a non-participant Chinese parent and student from Malaysia.

Procedure

All interviews were conducted to accommodate the wishes of the participants and cater to their convenience with regard to the time of day and place where they would feel most comfortable. Interviews with Case 2 respondents were conducted after the lapse of a week, while it was not possible

to keep to this time frame with Case 1 and Case 3 respondents because of distance and work schedules that could not be determined before hand. The duration of each interview with Case 2 respondents was restricted to one hour per person while with the other cases, there were several session of varying durations. After each interview, a transcription of the interview was given to the participants for their feedback on the accuracy of the interpretations and also to provide an opportunity for the participants to supplement, clarify, withdraw or correct previous information. All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in order to avoid any undue influence of other participants and the consequent contamination of data. Case 1 and Case 2 respondents were reminded not to discuss answers with each other.

The questions for the adult and student respondents were as follows:

Interview Questions for Parents

I. General Background Information

1. Could you please tell me when were you born? where born? in which country?
2. How many members are there in your family?
3. Tell me about the educational background of each person in your family. Economic background.
4. At what SES level do you place yourself and your family in Malaysia? How would you define your level of SES?
5. How old were you when you migrated to USA? Which year? With whom? How? (on what ground?) Why?

6. Who are with you now in USA? What are they doing?

II. Educational Background

1. What is your highest level of academic education? Professional education? Where obtained? Is it recognized here? Are you still studying now? What educational plans have you for yourself?
2. What other languages do you know other than your mother tongue?
3. Tell me about the attitude of your parents toward your education? What help did they give you? Did they encourage you to study? What was their aspiration for you? Did their aspiration matched yours? What is their philosophy toward education? To what extent does their attitude/philosophy influence you?

III. Working Background

1. What were you working as before migrating here? How many years? What position did you hold? Where? Why did you change your profession, if any? Tell me more about your occupation in Malaysia.
2. What are you working as in USA? Where? How many years? What position do you hold? Tell me more about your present occupation. Tell me more about your other jobs besides this one, if any.
3. How satisfied are you with your present job? What are the reasons?
4. What career do you aspire to in USA? Why do you choose this career? What actions have you taken at present in order to achieve this career?

IV. Socio-economic Status

1. What level of SES do you consider yourself to be in now? Which level of SES do you feel you deserve to be in? What are the constraints

against upward SES mobility for you? What would you do to move up to a higher SES?

2. Which community activities do you participate in? What position do you hold? What clubs/society are you a member of? Please elaborate. Why do you participate/not participate in these activities?
3. Do you consider yourself to have a wide/moderate/few number of friends here? Approximately how many do you have? Who are they? How do you get to know them?

V. Attitude towards Education

1. What is your attitude towards education? (Inculcate intellect, for economic, science and technology purposes, achieving of a rounded personality, for improving society, achieving status of a gentlemen, social mobility, respect, or not important)
2. Compare and contrast the American system of education with that of Malaysia from the preschool to the college levels. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Discuss the curriculum, teaching methods, grading system, discipline, expectations, teacher-student relationship, parent-school relationship, community-school relationship, teacher training, overall quality and purpose of education.
3. How do you evaluate these two systems in terms of their compatibility with your and your children's needs? What do you expect from the American system of education to be in the future?
4. How is/are your child/children taking to the American system of education? What kinds of complaints/problems do they face? Who do

they go to for help? What coping strategies do you see your children use? What coping strategies do you suggest to your children?

5. What do you hope your children will pursue after high school? after college? What do they themselves hope to pursue?
6. What influences have the American educational values had on your traditional values? (for example individualism/familial; independence/dependence; respect for elders and teachers; permissiveness/restraints; impulsiveness/reflectiveness; competitive/relaxing, etc.) Are they conflicting, complementing, accommodating? How do you resolve them?
7. Some minority parents allege that certain school practices cause minority students to do poorly in school (e.g. prejudices of some teachers, school regulations, curriculum, teachers' lack of cultural awareness, gender bias, instructional incompatibilities, etc.). How do you assess your child's academic performance in light of this allegation?
8. One explanation given for school failure of certain minority students as due to the labor market where they are excluded from taking up a certain profession or perceived rejection by them due to racial discrimination. How do you see this explanation affecting your child's academic work in school?
9. What do you know about bilingual education in America? Would you enrol your child in this program? Why or why not? What is your stand towards bilingual education in terms of its advantages and disadvantages?

VI. Gender Issue

1. Generally, it has been said that more traditional Chinese parents are likely to prefer males over females. Do you find this evident in Malaysia? What are the reasons for such preference? What is your stand on this?
2. How does the above preference being translated in practice?
3. How do you compare the treatment of the female in USA with those in Malaysia in relation to their education, occupation, and rights?
4. What role do you see for Chinese female/woman in your family? in USA? What are your expectations for them?
5. How far do you think girls should pursue academic education? (post high school, college, post graduate?) What consequences might there be for highly educated women? (lose friends? shame the males? difficult to get married?) What is your opinion on the traditional and non-traditional career for females?

VII. Adjustment to American Society/Culture

1. What are some of the ways in which American culture/society is different from yours? What were your very first reactions when you arrived in USA? Please comment on the differences that you have personally experienced.
2. How do you cope with the differences? To what extent were the strategies successful? Who do you go to when you find difficulties coping?
3. How do you see your children coping with these differences? How would you advise your children to cope with problems arising from

racial, ethnic, religious, contextual, cultural differences that he/she experienced in school, if any?

4. Can you give instances of conflicts in child-rearing practices between you and your adolescent children, if any? How do you resolve them?
5. What aspects of American culture you find are enriching to you? that should be emulated? that are disagreeable, conflicting and problematic? What aspects of Chinese culture you feel you should retain or discard?
6. How have you been discriminated in Malaysia, if any? How are you discriminated against here, if any? How did you cope with such discriminations? How do you feel about it?
7. Are there things you could do to help reduce the discriminations? or to minimize the conflicts between you and the mainstream culture?
8. In times of "culture clash" or when your children are confronted with prejudice, how would you like them to respond?
9. Some people allege that in order to succeed in American society one has to abandon one's culture . What is your opinion on this? Have you had to do this?
10. What , in your opinion, are the gains and losses from migrating here?

VIII. Model Minority

1. What reasons, do you believe, can contribute to the success/failure of Chinese in general and Chinese students in USA?
2. Chinese have been labelled as the "model minority" by the general American public. Are you aware of such label? What is your stand on

this? (a complement? a tool for shaming other minorities? a reason for certain political agenda? a model for others to follow? is it a myth?)

3. What do you think this will have on the academically poor Chinese students? bilingual students? ESL students? choice of subject placements? economically poor students?
4. Are your children aware of such label? How do they respond to such labelling? What implications do you think this label will have on your children? (treated differently by teachers, deny certain privileges, left out of certain activities, unrealistic expectations, given less help, etc.)
5. If your children have problem with this label, what would you suggest to them to cope with it?

IV. Future

1. What do you see yourself in future in terms of career? education? retirement? community involvement? societal changes?
2. What do you see your children in future in terms of career? education? community involvement? societal changes?
3. How would you want yourself or your children to become in future in America (culturally resistant, culturally assimilated, bicultural, culturally transmuted)?
4. Please provide me your reflections of your immigrations to America?

Interview Questions for Students

I. General Background

1. When were you born? where? in which country?

2. How many brothers and sisters do you have? What are they doing now? Where are they now?
3. How old were you when you migrated to USA?
4. Why did you and your family migrate to USA?

II. Educational Background

1. Which grade were you last in, in Malaysia?
2. How much English did you know before coming here? What problems did you face when learning English in Malaysia? here?
3. Which type of school were you in, in Malaysia?
4. How many languages do you know? Level of proficiency?

III. Attitudes towards Education

1. How do you compare and contrast the schools in Malaysia and in USA? (curriculum, teaching methods, grading system, discipline, teacher/parent expectations, teacher-student relationships, amount of learning).
2. Which do you like better--the school here or in Malaysia? Why? Tell me the strengths and/or weaknesses of schools here and in Malaysia.
3. What problems do you face in school, if any? How do you solve the problems that you just told me? (solve yourself? ask your friends? ask your teacher? office staff? ask your brother/sister? ask your parents?)
4. What kind of help do you need to succeed in school? in your career?
5. Overall, is school very important to you? Why?
6. Tell me your likes and dislikes of going to school.

IV. Gender Issue

1. How do you compare the abilities of Chinese boys and girls?
2. How are the males and females treated by the people in Malaysia? here? Please give examples.
3. Are there differences in how your parents treat you in relation to your brother/sister? What are they?
4. What is the place of woman in terms of education/occupation/rights?

V. Adjustments to American Society/Culture

1. What did you feel when you initially arrived in USA? in school?
2. What cultural differences/similarities do you find between Malaysia and here? Tell me about the differences/similarities.
3. As a result of the cultural differences, what problems do you face in USA? in school? Tell me how you cope with the problems (solve it yourself, go to others for help).
4. What differences in values, beliefs, hobbies, dress, friendship pattern, do you find between yourself and your parents?
5. How have you been discriminated in school, if any? outside of school? How did you cope with such discrimination?
6. What changes, if any, did you feel you have undergone? (values, beliefs, attitudes towards education, etc.).
7. What Chinese cultural practices do you want to retain/reject? Why?
8. What cultural practices do you find worthy for emulation/rejection in USA? Why?

VI. Model Minority

1. Some people have said that Chinese are a "model minority." Have you heard of this? What does that mean to you? Do you feel you belong to this group? How do you feel when you are regarded as a "model minority?" How do you respond to this?
2. Do you see your other Chinese friends as "model minority?" In what ways? How do they respond to such labelling?
3. Do you know why some of your Chinese friends are doing very well in their studies? and some doing very poorly?
4. How do you compare, generally, the academic performance of Chinese students to other non-Chinese students?
5. Do you feel you are treated differently by teachers, classmates and others on the basis of being a Chinese? How do they treat you?

VII. Future

1. What do you feel your chances of doing well in school here? Why?
2. What do you want to do after high school? after college? Why?
3. What will you need in order to get there? What must you do to get there?
4. What do you think the future will hold for you as a Chinese American?

Data Analysis and Discussion

Content analysis were used for treating the data. The data, as narrated by the respondents, were categorized into main headings encompassing their past experiences in Malaysia, the present situation in the United States of

America and the future the participants foresee for themselves. The analysis was structured according to the four research questions focussing on the educational aspect, cultural adaptations, attitude towards gender issues and the "model minority" label.

For introduction, the background of the respondents were analyzed according to their educational background, working background, and socio-economic status. Data obtained to answer the four research questions will then be analyzed. Research findings and conclusions followed by suggestions for further studies were presented.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

Data for analysis have been collected through a combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews with the respondents. The respondents were categorized into three cases comprising a total of eight respondents. The first case consists of Mr. K, Mrs. K and Elwin (Case #1), the second case, Mrs. T and Wern (Case #2), and the third case, Mr. L, Mrs. L and Chee (Case #3). Analysis was carried out according to the four research questions. Responses from the participants were not uniform. Some answers were given in considerable detail while others were cursorily treated. Some questions remained unanswered due to respondents' reluctance or inability to answer. This is to be expected because the respondents had different experiences, careers, family history and circumstances, education and personality traits. Still, there are many commonalties that can be drawn from their responses that are important for analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTION # 1

Given the traditional and centuries-long attitude of great reverence for scholarship and learning in Chinese society and culture, what impact does the existing American system of education have on the Chinese immigrants? How do Malaysians brought up in both Malaysia and the United States interact with

each other, especially in relation to the educational process? To what extent do they complement and reinforce each others strengths? Are there changes in the traditional Chinese values of scholarship and learning?

Purpose of Education

All eight respondents had the firm belief that education was of vital importance in order to improve one's livelihood; education was a passport to economic and social mobility. Mr. L considered it as a means of bettering oneself, Mrs. K as an important tool to success, Mrs. T as a means of acquiring skills to bring in monetary returns, Elwin as a road to success, and Mrs. L as a tool to obtaining a good job and be more aware of things in life. The respondents did not, however, view the benefits of education purely in economic terms. Mr. K considered education important for problem-solving, thinking and forecasting, enabling persons to know how to tackle a job and perform it more efficiently. Mr. L viewed education as a means of providing a better understanding of things in life and to appreciate the aesthetics. Mrs. K perceived education as a means of inculcating self-discipline and respect for others. Mrs. T considered education a means of guiding a person to behave more humanely, living harmoniously in this world and acquiring a richer and meaningful life. In addition, education can help one avoid potential problems better in life.

However each respondent described it, the indisputable consensus was that the purpose of education is to assist each individual to improve their quality

of life. They had absolute faith in the benefits of education. Hence, not surprisingly, Chinese parents and students in the United States continued to place an abiding trust in the power of education and enthrone it as part of their cultural values. It can be observed that the perspectives of the respondents on the purpose of education do not differ from those of the general mainstream American perspective. What differed was the intensity and systematic implementation of these perspectives.

United States and Malaysian Education Systems Compared

There are numerous differences in the systems of education in the United States and Malaysia. All the respondents were aware of such differences, whether at a superficial or deep level, depending upon the extent of their educational involvement, interests or career paths. An overview of the more significant differences is as follows. First, there is a hierarchical difference with American education based on a 6-2-4 system [six years of elementary school, two years of middle school and four years of high school] and the Malaysian on a 6-3-2-2 system [six years of elementary school, three years of lower secondary school, two years of upper secondary school and two years of preuniversity school] prior to a student entering college. Second, there is a mono-lingual public education in the United States, while is tri-lingual elementary education in the public schools in Malaysia and monolingual at the secondary level. This does not take into consideration the learning of a foreign language nor bilingual classes. Third, there are numerous educational programs offered in the United States such as special education, gifted and

talented, advanced placement, speech therapy, special academy, magnet schools and counselling, none of which exist in Malaysia. Fourth, the American curriculum offers more courses than the Malaysian curriculum . Fifth, there is compulsory education in the United States but not in Malaysia. Sixth, entrance to colleges and universities is based on the setting of racial quotas. Further comparison between the two systems of education continues below.

Discipline

Coming from an Asian society in Malaysia where group rights take precedence over individual rights and severe discipline for misbehaving students is popularly supported by society, it is little wonder that the respondents were in unanimous accord that discipline in the American schools is lax to the point of making the schools appear disorderly. This gave Mr. K the impression that some schools do not mete out any punishment for wrongdoing; Mrs. K felt that there seemed to be no discipline. Mr. L wondered how some students were able to take guns, knives and other weapons to schools and sell drugs. Elwin found that some students "run over the teachers" and felt that some teachers were frightened of students. He found the students were noisy and talked back to the teachers and were otherwise rude. Wern also found the students noisy and did not show up on time for classes like some of the teachers. Chee found some of the students were disrespectful of adults and usually teachers and administrators were not strict on discipline. Mrs. T concluded that the teachers and school authorities were helpless in solving

cases of indiscipline by the students. This appears to be one of the weaknesses in the American system of education.

The respondents provided some reasons for the lack of discipline. Mr. L and Mrs. T thought the social system itself bred indiscipline where the students were given too much freedom to do and say what they want while the parents are handicapped by the child protective laws. Mrs. T attributed part of the problem to the cultural trait of individualism. She reasoned that either the teachers and school administrators feared litigation from the parents which prevented them from enforcing discipline, or they did not care much about discipline. Mrs. L and Mrs. T observed that students were not taught to respect elders and teachers. Mrs. T felt that students do not only not respect teachers, but some of them do not even respect their parents or other adults. Wern felt that the teachers and administrators were tolerant of indiscipline, giving him the impression that they did not care about student behavior. Mr. K implied that the consequences for indiscipline, such as counselling, were generally not effective even though it might be effective for some.

When comparing discipline, all the respondents acknowledged that discipline in Malaysia was generally stricter and teachers more willing to take the responsibility of enforcing discipline in their classes. However, the implication for Malaysian schools, for Mrs. K, was that some teachers went beyond the limit and humiliated the students. Mr. L noticed that discipline in Malaysia appeared harsh, but he was ambivalent in passing judgement as to whether it was good or bad. The three adolescent respondents affirmed the fact that discipline in Malaysian schools was stricter and teachers could mete out corporal punishment. They felt that discipline was well-enforced in Malaysia.

Respondents generally felt that there is a necessity to objectively define what acts constitute a breach of discipline before a meaningful comparison could be made. Given the concept that discipline is culturally constructed, the respondents might be comparing the extremities of the discipline continuum. Like the contentious debate over the concept of human rights between the United States and Third World countries, the concept of discipline has to be viewed from different cultural perspectives. Similarly, the definition of appropriate consequences or punishment is also culturally specific. The incident over the caning of Michael Fay in Singapore over acts of vandalism is a case in point. There were mixed reactions in America.

The adult respondents related that they took pro-active measures to ensure that their children did not misbehave in schools by attending parent conferences, keeping close surveillance on their children's activities, assessing the company they keep, forbidding them to be outdoors at night and discussing contemporary social and cultural issues in America.

Mainstream Americans viewed the Asian concept of discipline and the accompanying consequences as too harsh, extreme and "cruel and unusual punishment." The Asians viewed the mainstream American attitude as too indulgent, permissive and self-destructive. One aspect of discipline in American schools that the respondents were happy with was the absence of corporal punishment.

Teacher-student Relationship

All the respondents expressed positive teacher-student relationships in positive terms such as "loving," "caring," "warm," "impersonal," "friendly," "open," and "relaxed." The only exception was the experience of Mr. and Mrs. L, when they were ignored by the teacher to whom they wished to confer. Elwin and Wern felt that teachers attempted to make them "feel at home" and tried to understand the students before answering their questions. Most of the respondents found that American teachers took the trouble to know the students and were appreciative of this effort. This attitude was reiterated by Elwin and Chee of their successful experiences in ESL classes where the teachers took extra time, effort and care to assist them in learning English. Overall, all of the respondents, particularly Mr. and Mrs. K felt that the friendliness and warmth of the teachers caused them to feel a sense of welcome and acceptance in American schools as never felt before in Malaysia. Some of the respondents felt that a student can develop friendship with the teachers in America, whereas the teachers in Malaysia are always the authoritative figures demarcated by their social role in society.

All of the respondents were glad that the teacher did not exert pressure on the students to perform academically nor compare one student's academic performance with another. The absence of pressure was welcomed by Mrs. T. She felt that her son had lost his "love for learning" due to the high-pressured quest for excellence in Malaysia.

Do the positive teacher-student relationships necessarily translate into high expectations for the students' academic success? Mrs. T did not think so.

She felt that teachers tend to do less academically for the students than in Malaysia. She felt that teachers in America did not take pride in their students' achievements. Could this be due to less importance placed on academic achievement by the general American population? The absence of pressure that students perform well could be interpreted as a lowering of expectations for students or just unconcern over academic performance. Mr. K expressed his reservation about the amount of academic knowledge taught in American schools and expected more academic knowledge to be taught. Mrs. K observed that although there was a warm relationship between teachers and students, there was no accompanying respect for teachers by the students. Mr. L thought the nature of the relationship depended very much on the individual school, teacher and student.

All of the respondents described teachers in Malaysia as strict, impersonal, cold, formal, fierce and serious while holding high expectations for students' academic success. Contrary to American teachers, they felt Malaysian teachers exhibited too great a pride in their students' academic achievements. Malaysian teachers were more willing to give students academic assistance. The descriptions of the teachers' attitudes included a seriousness and reverence for education and a concern for public examination results. For Malaysian teachers, examinations results are taken as a reflection of their teaching ability and a source of personal satisfaction that their students are performing well.

Overall, the respondents felt that: schools are important places of learning; academic success was of paramount importance; respect for teachers and school authorities should be inculcated and that the production of

disciplined students was important to the Chinese. This was perceived in contrast to the American perspective of school as an institution of socialization, a place to have fun and to develop interpersonal skills with the acquisition of academic knowledge less of a priority.

Curriculum

It was the consensus of the respondents that the school curriculum in the United States covered a wide range of subjects and electives in order to respond to the diverse needs and talents of the students. All students' talents were valued whether they were exhibited in academics, sports, music, dancing, acting or student government. In Malaysia, only academics are valued. This is the most prominent strength of the American curriculum.

In addition to the diversity in the types of courses offered in American schools, there are also different levels of difficulty; for instance, there is the availability of Advanced Placement courses where college credits can be earned. The offering of Advanced Placement courses led Mr. L to comment that the American curriculum had higher standards compared to the Malaysian curriculum; the latter, operating with only one standard, where every student had to take the same course. Mr. L pointed out the misconception Chinese generally had that the Math standard in the United States was low. [The researcher's personal observations and experiences studying and teaching in both countries confirmed Mr. L's observation that the Math AP course is indeed of high standard but this does not apply to the normal Mathematic course.] Mr. L praised the American system for allowing more advanced students to go ahead

and not penalizing slower students for progressing at their own pace. The researcher felt that the offering of AP courses was ability grouping which was not a contentious issue like tracking in school. Wern felt that the flexibility of the American curriculum made it possible for some students to graduate with high school-level courses while some with the most challenging college-level courses. Based on the researcher's knowledge of the Malaysian school curriculum, the introduction of AP courses would be an educational innovation for the Malaysian schools to link the preuniversity courses to the university curriculum. However, some respondents found that less languages were taught in American schools. As some of the respondents have implied (Mrs. L, Mrs. T, Mrs. K), bigotry, intolerance and racism are the direct result of ignorance, the learning of foreign languages and cultures could contribute to the American students becoming more informed and more accepting of differences.

The diversity of educational programs in American schools, such as special education, gifted and talented, bilingual, multi-cultural, regional occupation and advanced placement classes ensure that as many students as possible were included. Mr. L commented that the curriculum would enable the "brainy and less brainy" students to feel successful.

In terms of the practicality of the courses, most of the respondents felt that the American curriculum was more practical. For instance, Mr. L thought that the American curriculum was geared more toward everyday uses than the Malaysian curriculum, which tends to disseminate theoretical knowledge. This observation was supported by Mrs. K, who was impressed with the independent self-help skills that were taught in schools, such as learning how to tie shoe laces, something unheard of in Malaysia. All of the respondents considered the

completion of projects, library research and reports as helpful for developing practical skills which the students could use after graduating from school. Mrs. T also agreed that the curriculum was practical in that it was more concerned than the Malaysian curriculum with the present and future rather than the past.

Besides the academic curriculum, extra-curricular activities provided by the American schools have a better chance of meeting the interpersonal, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic and musical talents of the students. They could develop these skills for their livelihood as American society values this economically or aesthetically, that is, they are as important as academic curriculum. All of the respondents were aware of these extra-curricular activities, such as field trips, societies, clubs, dances, music, workshops, sports, games and student body activities. All the student respondents expressed their approval for these activities.

All of the adult respondents thought that the Malaysian curriculum was too rigid and was not geared towards developing the creative talents of its students. Mrs. T stated that the students just learned facts from books, which were then simply regurgitated during an examination. The students were overdependent on textbooks to provide the knowledge. Mr. L felt that some of the facts presented in textbooks were biased and only represent the perspective of the authors.

Mrs. L, Wern and Chee felt that the Malaysian curriculum in Chinese-medium schools overemphasized the learning of languages, where a student was expected to be trilingual by the time he graduated from high school. In America, most students are monolingual.

It can be concluded from the responses that the American and Malaysian curriculum differ in depth, content, practicality, creativity, variety and difficulty. The American curriculum appears to be more successful in meeting the varied needs of diverse students, whereas the Malaysian curriculum is "one size fits all," resulting in fewer options for student success. Furthermore, the Malaysian curriculum was designed to sieve out those students who cannot meet its stringent demands on the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence of students to advance to higher classes. Hence, the American curriculum appears to be "inclusive," while the Malaysian "exclusive."

Bilingual Education

All of the adult respondents have vague ideas or were not knowledgeable about bilingual education as practised in America. They thought bilingual education was the teaching of another foreign language. But when informed of the nature of bilingual education in America, all the respondents expressed their willingness to enroll their children in bilingual program if one was available in their school districts. They gave several reasons for their approval. One, their children can benefit from knowing another language as well as their own culture; Chinese language will be a useful business language in future; and it will be useful when travelling. Most of the respondents emphasized that the learning of Chinese should not be construed as abandoning the learning of English. They were realistic and practical in acknowledging that English is the lingua franca in this country. Mr. L was emphatic that everyone in America must learn English. The researcher

anticipates that every adult respondents, if specifically asked would not hesitate to acknowledge the preeminence of English in this country.

Grading System

One of the most prominent differences in the two systems of education is in the manner grades are awarded. Every respondent was aware that the Malaysian system of grading relied solely on performance at examinations. They realized that the end result of such a system creates a high-pressurize atmosphere for its students and the likelihood of students drawing the wrong conclusion that education is passing examinations and vice-versa. The Malaysian grading system is norm-referenced and rigidly set to conform to the bell curve. Public examinations are also used as a sieving device to remove students from otherwise overpopulated schools. Grades and percentages are used to record individual student's performance.

Seven out of the eight respondents felt that the American system of grading is fairer, causes less tension and nervousness in students and takes account the varying abilities of the students. Grades in American schools are awarded based on many performance tasks, such as tests, projects, research papers, daily class assignments, amount of effort expended and extra credit assignments. The different manner of assessments in America caused a majority of the respondents to feel that it is easy to secure As in the courses. Wern felt that the grading system was more lenient in America as grades were given starting from zero base to as high a level as possible, while the Malaysian started from a maximum and deductions were made based on the mistakes

committed by the students. However, all the respondents were not aware of other more recent innovative assessment devices like authentic and portfolio assessments.

Although most of the respondents expressed a more positive attitude towards the American system of grading, two respondents expressed their uncertainty over what the terms like "excellent," "good" and "satisfactory" mean and they felt they would understand better if the grades could be quantified in terms of the GPA.

It is hoped that in future when authentic and portfolio assessments are widely implemented, some of the respondents will not be further confused about these forms of assessments, which are unheard of in Malaysia. The respondents, too, have to learn how to rely less on traditional assessment reports and change their expectations that grades can only be scored in numbers and letters.

Teaching Methodology

Most of the respondents, particularly the student respondents are aware that the teachers in America used a variety of teaching methods to present their lessons while the Malaysian teachers have a limited number of teaching methods. There was heavy reliance on the lecture method. The student respondents preferred teachers using a variety of teaching methods to break the monotony of the lessons. Based on the experience and observation of the researcher, the American philosophy toward teaching methodology was futuristic and innovative where many educational researchers are willing to

experiment and popularize new methods so as to be more effective in meeting the varied learning needs of students.

As the Malaysian curriculum is examination-driven, it is expected that teachers will employ those methods that are the most effective and efficient for students to get the correct answers regardless of whether they understand the materials being taught. Hence, methodologies that value inquisitiveness, discovery, and creativity that can arouse interests in learning are ignored as they invariably are time-consuming and costly. With the limited amount of financial allocation earmarked for teaching aids, it is considered a great luxury to use hands-on and discovery methodologies. The researcher is aware of the vast differences in the amount of money spent on teaching aids, stationery, field trips, and high technological teaching tools between the two systems of education. As a consequence, heavy reliance on text-books, revision course books, preparatory books and after-school tutoring are the cheapest routes to achieving good examination results in Malaysia.

The examination mentality that defines what is good education in Malaysia is also reflected in the pre-service and in-service training of teachers where the lecture method, worksheets, practice and drill are the most common methodologies taught. Where discovery and scientific methodology were taught in teacher training programs, it was treated cursorily. The preparation for examination goal did not require the inculcation of the love for learning. This had prompted one of the respondents to comment that a student has to be highly motivated, disciplined and dedicated to excel in academics. Another cited the Malaysian preoccupation with examinations as the most important

aspect of education that had caused her children to like the American system better.

In describing the Malaysian teaching methodology, Mrs. K considered it a "do as I tell you" system. Mrs. T felt that the Malaysian teachers predominantly used the lecture method of delivery most of the time, except in science laboratory where more hands-on activities were used. This is possible in Malaysia because most Malaysian students are able to concentrate and listen through a lecture without disrupting the class, while this is not possible in most American classrooms. This indicates again the differences in discipline, respect for teachers, acceptable social behavior and generally, the culture of the society. Mr. L observed that teachers in the United States use numerous teaching methods and try their best to make the lesson effective with emphasis on "understanding rather than accumulation of facts." Similarly, Mr. K noticed that American teachers organize hands-on activities as part of the lessons, which made learning fun. Elwin particularly liked lessons where high technological aids were used. Wern found the teaching effective when the lessons were delivered through the use of videos, cooperative learning, field trips, projects and guest speakers which tend to make learning fun and less pressurized. Chee agreed that there was very little drill and practice used in the American schools except in beginning ESL classes. Mr. L approved of such varied methods of teaching in which he found less pressure in learning. However, Wern felt that if there was an over-reliance of "fun" activities to teach even simple concepts, it could become a waste of time.

Californian laws required all teachers to be credentialled before they were allowed to instruct in the classrooms. Mr. L and Mrs. T noticed that

teachers in America are qualified and well-trained, while many teachers in Malaysia were not qualified or not trained to teach the subjects they were instructing. This was due to the dire shortage of trained, specialized teachers in Malaysia. Furthermore, the researcher observed that American teachers were more receptive to new teaching methods and were more willing to experiment.

Overall, seven out of eight respondents preferred the American teaching methods, which concentrated on learning rather than preparation for examinations. One point which was repeatedly mentioned by respondents was the absence of pressure to outdo their peers in order to obtain distinctions in their grades in America. The general expectation of the school environment did not require students to score distinction at all cost. Hence, the emphasis in America was on how to make learning fun and at the same time rewarding. The researcher feels that the choice of teaching techniques depends on many conditions, such as students' learning styles, students' self-discipline, the motivation of the students, financial resources, expectations of students, parents, school and community, class size, assessment method and the overall aim and purpose of education of a particular country.

Parent-school-community Relationships

All the adult respondents had high expectations for their children doing well in school. To meet this end, they involved themselves actively in their schooling by monitoring their academic work, the company they kept, their behavior in and out of school, and giving constant reminders and advice. The most important and effective reminder to do well in school was the reason for

their migration. Although all these respondents were very concerned with their children's academic work, it was not shown through their participation in school and community activities to any significant extent. They preferred to guide their children relying on their individual efforts at home. By American standards, they were found wanting in their contribution to school and community. Their limited contributions were confined to occasional parent-teacher activities in school, translation for non-English speaking students, helped in graduation ceremonies and attending parent-teacher conferences.

The reasons given for such low participation were time constraints, weariness after a hard day's work, and the activities held during school hours, at night, or during weekdays. This researcher believes the perception held by parents that their participation in these activities would in no way improve their children's academic work was another reason. Furthermore, parent and community involvement in school activities were not commonly practised in Malaysia. Parents were not accustomed to participate in back-to-school-night, field trips, parent conferences, home-coming games, or graduation ceremonies. All the adult respondents did not particularly enjoy such gatherings and preferred to be involved in the education of their children through their individual efforts at home. The respondents were aware that many American parents seem to enjoy such participation and would even take leave to attend these school activities. In addition, American parents will willingly volunteer as guest speakers, financial contributors, fun raisers and active participants in many school activities.

There was a role demarcation between the Chinese adults and children, as exemplified by Mrs. T's belief that the job of children was to study and do well

academically in schools, while the job of providing the basic necessities of life was the role of the parents. Hence, the adult respondents would not allow their children to compromise their schooling by permitting them to work part-time during school days nor to engage in delinquent behaviors. All the adult respondents had high expectations for their children and the minimum they set for their children was at least a bachelor's degree. They would also encourage them to go to as high an academic level as they possibly could. None of the respondents insist on their children obtaining distinctions in all their subjects. Could this be the influence of the American attitude towards grading and academic achievement to a certain extent? This researcher believes that the adult respondents' past experience at struggling to score in examinations, combined with a liberal attitude towards academic learning in America, might have some impact on their attitudes. All of them had high expectations tempered with judicious and realistic demands on their children.

The three adolescent respondents were unanimous in their observations that American parents do not have high expectations of their children's academic performance, as exemplified by Elwin's comments that the American parents attitude that "a B (grade) is good and C is not bad," or Chee's comment that "it is okay as long as one tries hard and there is no need to get an A." Wern felt that the American parents expected their children to have fun in school rather than to take education seriously. Although the parent respondents have high expectation of their children's academic performance, a lower grade was acceptable only when they had tried their best. Based on her own experience, Mrs. L's attitude towards grades approximated the general American parents' expectations.

Financial Resources

All of the adult respondents either mentioned directly or alluded to the fact that the American school system, through its decentralized management and financing through taxes from the public, spends more on education than the Malaysian school system. This is reflected in the smaller class size, use of high technology teaching aids, office equipment, administrative staff, and abundant stationeries. All these contribute to more effective lessons presentations and more attention being paid to students. Besides these, a variety of support services are also available, such as psychologists, speech therapists, adaptive physical education instructors, teacher aides, resource specialists, mentor teachers, and others. At the college level, financial aid in the form of grants, scholarships, and loans are available to underprivileged students of all races. In Malaysia, financial resources were allocated by the federal government. The allocations were not uniformly parcelled out as they were based on which race the educational institutions were serving.

Opportunity for Higher Education

The most compelling reason for migration for all the respondents is the search for greater opportunity in tertiary education. The lack of opportunity in tertiary education has always been a politically and socially contentious issue in Malaysia. Selection to tertiary institutions is based on racial quotas. Many qualified non-Malay students are denied higher education. On the other hand, the great number of colleges, private and public, in America offers the

respondents an exhaustive choice of institutions as well as types of courses. Opportunities are open to everyone regardless of race, creed and even financial standing. The only constraint seems to be a personal willingness to study and the ability to finish the course. Comparatively, in Malaysia, the Chinese are severely constrained by racial quotas, religion, choice of institution (only seven to choose from), choice of course and finances.

In conclusion, it is obvious that the American system of education has many positive aspects and it can be inferred that this system attempts to cater to the needs of all students with diverse ability levels as well as to the multiple intelligences of the students.

Compatibility of Student Respondents to American Education System

It is a consensus of the respondents that the American education system is compatible to their educational needs. All the student respondents liked the system and were performing very well academically in schools. The parents did not find the students facing any insurmountable difficulties in their academic work and they did not bring home complaints from school. The nature of the curriculum, the grading system, relationships with the teachers and teaching methodologies posed no problems to learning for any student respondent. In fact, they thrived in the American system of education. They found no conflict between their cultural reverence for education and the American education. Their learning styles did not conflict with the teachers' teaching style nor were there any cultural obstacles as a result of the difference in cultures between the teachers and student respondents.

The student respondents' only complaints came from their social interactions with other students and these were considered minor distractions. Elwin and Chee fared better than Wern. He was the respondent who experienced the most problems with other American students.

All of the respondents were very satisfied with the educational opportunity the American education system had offered them. The adult respondents were very relieved that their children did not have to be subjected to the invidious racial discrimination as practised in Malaysia. They were free from the shackles of racial quotas in college admission, and choice of courses which can determine their future career paths. The controversy over affirmative action in college admission which had discriminated against some Chinese students in the past would have raised some fears of the old practice in Malaysia. However, all the adult respondents did not appear to be aware of the implications of affirmative action in college admission or might have considered this less alarming as there are many more excellent colleges in America to attend.

Do social and cultural incompatibilities between teachers and students and future job-market discriminations cause minority students to do poorly in schools?

All five adult respondents disagreed that incompatibilities between teachers and students and future job-market discrimination are causes of some minority students performing poorly in schools. They considered them as scapegoating. They firmly believed that the present American system of

education does not discriminate against their children in any way so as to adversely affect their academic performance. In fact, they believed that if their children did not perform well academically, it was due primarily to their not studying hard enough, not to the fault of others. Mr. L and Mrs. T believed there are going to be forms of discrimination in any part of the world. They preferred to concentrate on how to solve, minimize or ignore such problems rather than calling attention to them. Mr. L believed that at times one had to live with discrimination and make the best of a situation rather than try to resolve it since sometimes it is not possible to do so. The researcher feels that underlying their responses is the belief that diligence can help to alleviate the effect of discrimination based on what the Chinese in Malaysia had experienced when race-based policies were implemented in 1970.

Problems and Coping Strategies in Schools

It is inevitable that when one enters a totally new environment, that one has to face the problem of adjustment to a new culture. Some immigrants may be easily overwhelmed by the simple initial adjustment, while others may persist for some time. Whatever the nature of the problems, the most important question is how did the new immigrant cope? Some coping strategies were initiated by the students themselves and some with the advice and help of their parents. All the respondents discussed their problems and coping strategies with their children.

Academic Problems

On their first arrival in the United States, Elwin and Chee faced English language problems in their pronunciation, vocabulary, reading and writing. Elwin did not speak a word during his first day of school, although he understood what was said to him. Chee even resorted to using Malay and Chinese when engaged in verbal fights with his peers. They were placed in an ESL class for a year. They revealed that they were scared to speak initially. Hence, they resorted to using Krashen's "silent period" listening and observing to cope with their situations. They found that the English spoken in the United States was far beyond their rudimentary knowledge of English to which they were exposed in Malaysia. They exited from the ESL classes after a year through their own diligence, help and encouragement from parents and other family members, peers and teachers.

In other subject areas, when faced with difficulties, Wern went to the academic center in his school to seek help from more senior student tutors, plus outside volunteers from Stanford University and elsewhere, peers, teachers and paid tutors. When he found out that it was not always possible to consult with teachers, as they had limited class time and too many students to cater to, he had to seek the help of others. Whenever his teacher organized evening review sessions on those academic areas where he was weak, he made it a point to attend them. As Wern found that his aptitude was not in the hard sciences and mathematics, he concentrated his time and effort on the humanities and liberal arts.

As there were numerous courses of studies and electives available in school, all the student respondents consulted their parents on the choice of subjects. This gave the parents an opportunity to play the role of advisors and get involved in their children's education. All the adult respondents revealed that they discussed with their children which courses they would like to take, linking them with their aptitude and interest for a future career. All the adult respondents regularly enquired about their children's academic work. Mr. K was aghast when his son, Elwin, told him that he wanted to study for a career as a fighter pilot. Mr. K did not forbid him point blank, but persisted on a path of advising, persuading and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the job, giving his son alternatives to think over until Elwin changed his mind. He managed to convince Elwin to change his ambition to that of a commercial pilot. This coping strategy of compromise in the face of conflicting interests presented a win-win situation where the parent's fear of the son's safety was allayed while the son did not have to choose a career completely not to his liking.

Social Problems

All of the respondents stated that their children did not face many academic problems. Most of their problems came from interactions with peers of different cultural backgrounds. All student respondents consulted their parents when they could not cope with the problems, or when they needed psychological support.

The first problem all three student respondents faced was teasing from American students. Elwin was asked inappropriate questions and he coped by

ignoring them. Chee's name was made fun of by American peers and he too chose to ignore this as he realized that reacting would exacerbate the teasing. He also attempted to solve this problem by continuing to play and keep company with those who teased him. He would sometimes sit with his other friends when the teasing became intense or when there was physical danger. Wern was teased about his ignorance of American culture, to which he coped by telling himself to let time pass, that he would soon learn more about American culture. He tried not to react to the teasing. Mrs. L revealed that Chee and his sister discussed changing their names with her so as to avoid teasing. Mrs. L explained to them that American students do not understand Chinese culture, and there was no need to change their names as they already have an identity of their own. She told them to treat the teasing as "letting it come in one ear and go out the other." She encouraged them to believe in themselves when they were looked down upon by other Americans.

The second problem was more serious in nature involving physical bullying. Wern and Chee attempted to solve this problem physically. Wern had to struggle with three of his peers when they took his hamburgers which they threw to each other for fun. Chee had to wrestle with another student when the latter thought Chee threw the ball at him. Besides settling the problem by himself, Wern also reported the bullying to his school teachers and administrators. He was disappointed that the teachers and administrators were not effective in solving the problem. Wern had tried to adjust his perceptions about what constitutes behavioral problems (which might be very different from the Malaysian perception), and had tried to accept the prevailing American mores of the school. Wern told his parent that some teachers did not care

whether the class was noisy or not. Wern had tried asking his classmates not to make noise, but instead of stopping they ganged up on him. Wern was advised by his parent that discipline in the classroom was not his concern; it was the responsibility of the teacher. Wern had also tried to make more friends. However, he found it difficult because he did not play the games American students generally played nor did he go to social gatherings or "hang around." Mrs. T had also advised him to widen his circle of friends. When he felt that he was rejected by American friends, he made more Asian friends. Making more Asian friends was a coping strategy, but not a very laudable one as it guaranteed that other Americans would level the charge that Asians are "clannish."

In addition, Mrs. T advised Wern to learn to take jokes less seriously and when he could not do so, to just ignore them altogether. To help Wern cope with bullying in school, Mrs. T requested a conference with the school counsellor, disciplinary teacher and the parents of the bully. She had also advised Wern to psychologically rationalize for himself that it is "all right to be different and to follow what your instincts, temperament and personality tell you." Mrs. L, too, promised her daughter that she would set up a conference with her teacher and principal if her failing grade was not resolved when the teacher accused her daughter of copying an essay.

Elwin experienced a third type of social problem but he coped with it by following his conscience of what is right or wrong. He went to a movie with his friends and some of them wanted to continue to watch the following show without paying. He felt this was wrong and told his friends that he would like to

go home after the first show. His friends were quite understanding and this did not result in any negative impact on their friendship.

The next coping strategy commonly used and advised by the adult respondents was to be careful when making friends and to avoid those, in their judgement were not good company. They used their personal judgement through careful observations of the behaviors of their peers. This was exemplified by Elwin, who said "bad" companions would generally leave him alone.

Mr. K used the technique of preemption before his children were involved with "bad" company. He closely observed the company they kept, monitored their activities and required his children to inform him or his spouse where they were going. This preventive measure was also used by all the adult respondents as they did not want their children getting involved in delinquent behaviors. Mr. K coped with a problem by transferring his son to a different school when the child came home using vulgar language, talking back to his wife and imitating "funny" behaviors. He speculated that it was due to the school environment and peer influence. All the adult respondents used discussions on current and cultural issues, discrimination in Malaysia and the purpose of their migration as reminders to their children to make the fullest use of their presence in America.

Regarding the problem of discrimination in the United States, all the adult respondents were realistic that it is present everywhere; the only difference is in its degree. From the responses, the tone and attitude of the respondents, it can be inferred that discrimination as practised in America is much less intense and is found to be more tolerable than in Malaysia. Mr. L stated that he did not even

want to think about resolving it as it was impossible for him to change human nature. He suggested that on an individual basis, he can try not to behave in ways that can reinforce the stereotype Americans have of Chinese. He prefers to find ways of how to live with it. Mrs. T confronts this issue by trying as much as possible to minimize it instead of complaining. This can be done by explaining the cultural differences or to talk it out to non-Chinese Americans.

Summary

An analysis of the participants' responses appears to indicate that they continue to practise their respect for education and are transmitting this value to their children. They have indicated that the American system of education does not conflict with their basic beliefs in education. They urged their children to do their best that their ability allows them. They found that their children were able to blend into the new education system with the minimum of disruptions and problems. In fact, they are thriving in this new environment. A combination of freedom from racial quotas and discrimination as practised in Malaysia, reward for merit in scholastic ability and availability of financial assistance is facilitating their children's progress toward an optimistic, enriching and rewarding future. There is no indication of a change in their basic traditional value placed on scholarship and learning.

RESEARCH QUESTION # 2

Considering the differences between the eastern and western cultures, what coping strategies do the recent Chinese Immigrants use to negotiate a tolerable, if not enriching experience, for themselves in the home, school and society?

Many differences between eastern and western culture such as politics, stage of economic development, and economic system posed formidable challenges for the respondents. All of the respondents acknowledged the differences between Chinese and mainstream American cultures at both the superficial and deep levels. However, their responses were not uniform, differing in intensity, detail, and concern for the cultural aspects in question. The initial feelings of all respondents when immersed in the new American culture ranged from apprehension, anxiety, nervousness to excitement, curiosity and optimism. Mr. K and Wern felt awkward in the new surroundings as "square pegs in round holes." Elwin, Mrs. K and Chee felt excited, filled with curiosity to explore the new environment, while Mr. K and his son felt scared. Two of the three student respondents felt apprehensive about their ability to communicate in English. Wern felt strange in a new school setting populated by Americans who look so different physically. The most confident of the eight respondents was Mr. L who was sanguine about the United States being a good place to live in with plenty of family-oriented public facilities; great educational opportunities for his children and high living standard. Mrs. L found the society to be fast-moving, environmentally conscious and orderly.

American and Malaysian Chinese Cultures Compared

The gap between Chinese and American cultures is wide in many aspects, yet there are certain similarities that seem to complement each other. The differences inevitably require certain coping strategies to help them negotiate a tolerable and enriching experience for themselves, whether at home, in schools or in society in America. The following analysis will detail the differences and the respondents' perception of whether they are exemplars to be emulated or rejected in their process of acculturation.

Interpersonal Relationships

The most prominent part of the cultural divide can be found in human relationships--the relationship between husband and wife; between parent and children; and within their own culture.

Husband-wife Relationship

This relationship was emphasized by all of the adult respondents as very distinctly different from the Chinese relationship. It was of concern not for themselves, but more importantly, for the future marriage relationships of their children. All of the adult respondents felt that marriage in American society appear to be treated with little seriousness. It can be as easily dissolved as to enter into. This tenuous relationship is reflected in the high rate of divorce reported by many research studies which claimed about half of all marriages

end in divorce. The respondents felt American marriage appears to be a matter of convenience and the attitude of the general society seems to be one of unconcern by this high rate of divorce. There seems to be an absence of sanctity to the matrimonial relationship. This, in combination with other cultural traits of the American society such as individualism, liberalism, and permissiveness are perceived by the respondents as contributing to the breakdown of marriages.

On the other hand, all adult respondents believe that Chinese marriages are "sacrosanct" and both parties will resist divorce even though there may be tremendous strains and stresses. This researcher notes that the adult respondents did not mention explicitly that Chinese marriage is not seen as the union of two individuals exclusively, but the union of two families. Hence, family intervention and mediation from the parents, relatives and friends take the place of marriage counsellors to help bridge the differences before degenerating into divorces. Furthermore, the general Chinese society disapprove of divorces, which has contributed to the general reluctance to take them as a handy problem-solving technique between husband and wife.

Sacrifice for the sake of the children, even if the marriage was miserable is one Chinese cultural trait often cited by married couples as a strong motivator against divorce. Some of the adult respondents mentioned this ability to sacrifice for others as a positive aspect of Chinese culture.

All of the adult respondents indicated that the high rate of divorce in American marriages is something they do not want to emulate and will not like their children to emulate either.

Parent-child and Family Relationship

All of the adult respondents observed that American parents expect their children to be independent and leave home when they are 17 or 18 years old. They felt that this is like terminating parental obligation toward their children and the latter are free to do what they like. Mrs. K related she was told that American children are required to pay rent if they continue to live in their parents' house and conversely, if they perform household chores, they can expect payment from the parents. The conclusion drawn from this relationship is like a business transaction. Is this contributing to what Mrs. T considers as a "cold" relationship? All of the respondents found this cultural trait conflicting with their cultural value.

On the other hand, all of the adult respondents are aware that there is little or no role at all for the elderly in the family. They are sent to live in seniors' center or old folks' homes. The respondents perceived this a reciprocal treatment for the adults by their children, in response to their encouragement to leave home early. This reflects the individualistic characteristic of American culture. Chee noticed this phenomenon and commented that American family ties are weak. Wern stated he does not like to emulate this cultural trait.

Mr. K, Mrs. K and Mrs. T found it strange when parents want to visit their children have to telephone first for an appointment and, sometimes to ask for permission. In Chinese society, there is no demarcation of who is the owner of the house and parents have every right to visit the house any time they want without having to make appointments. In fact, the children will be happy and appreciate their parents' visit. The underlying assumption is that the children's

house is also the parents' house. This relationship can be looked at in terms of inheritance. When the parents die, all the property will be inherited by their children, instead of going to charity. Mrs. T felt it so incredible when one of her colleagues did not inherit anything from her deceased father who gave seven million dollars to a recreation flying club, while this colleague has to struggle to make ends meet every month.

Mrs. T expressed her shock when her colleague told her that she cut her mother-in-law's hairs and charged her for the service. To her this is incomprehensible as in Chinese family, the daughter-in-law would be very glad and honored to perform a favor for the mother-in-law. Mrs. T felt strange when another colleague of hers refused to send forty dollars to her daughter to purchase air ticket to return home. For the Chinese, no parents will hesitate to do this.

Chinese cultural practice is an exact opposite of American practice regarding extended family. Chinese parents like to have their children live with them as long as they are still single. In more traditional family, even if a son was married they would like them to live together in the same house. However, in more modern times, Malaysian parents expect their children to live in their own house once they were married as a recognition of their married status and the right to start a family of their own. Chinese family tradition dictates that as long as a child is single, s/he is not considered an adult, even though they may be chronologically advanced in age.

This researcher believes that this premature severance of parental-child relationship, among other cultural practices, help contribute to the independent-minded American. It can also result in the loss of control over their children's

behavior and discipline in school. This is another American cultural trait that all of the respondents do not want to emulate. Mr. and Mrs. L are well aware that it will not be possible for them to live together with their children once they are married, but hope they can live next-door with their children.

Mr. L, Mrs. K, Chee and Mrs. T found certain American parent-child relationship worthy of emulation. Mr. L felt that he has lost the chance to be closer to his adolescent son in the way American parents have. American adults are found to be more accepting of differences in opinion of their children, giving them more freedom, talking to them more and engaging more in their children's activities. Mr. L felt that he has been too strict with his son. Mrs. K too appreciates the American parent-child relationship where adults are able to act like "buddies" to their children, participate in their activities and to "bow down and listen to the children." Chee too felt that Chinese parents should allow their children to explore and learn more about themselves. Mr. L and Mrs. K felt that Chinese family should de-emphasize the authoritarian power of parents and other elders in the family. Mr. L felt that respect for elders should be balanced by the camaraderie of American parents toward their children. Mrs. K has a bad experience when her uncle and aunt took advantage of their authority to bully her. Mrs. T believed that Chinese fathers should learn from American fathers how to be more involved in doing household chores such as parenting the children, helping in the house and involving in children's activities.

Hierarchy of Roles

The practice of giving American children their "independence" early, individual rights, the feeling of "self over others", and laws to protect the rights of children from abuse by parents have been speculated by all of the adult respondents as contributions to the loss of control over their children by American parents. Mrs. K emphasized that among American families, she perceives an absence of family roles which leads to the confusion of really knowing "who is heading the family and who tells who to do things?"

The functioning of a Chinese family was based on clear demarcation of roles. Each individual has a role to play in the family inclusive of grandparents, parents and children, in the extended family. All of the adult respondents acknowledged tacitly that grandparents have an important role to play in the family, instead of being sent to the seniors' centers. Mr. L believed strongly that grandparents belong in the house. They have extensive life experiences, wisdom, and knowledge to impart to their children and grandchildren. He found them to be an invaluable source of education for the younger generations. From his conversation with elderly persons in the seniors' center in America, Mr. L was told that they led lonely life. He was emphatic that elderly parents should not be let alone to "wait for their time to die." Although the rest of the adult respondents did not mention specifically their opinion on this issue of the role of grandparent, this researcher concludes from other related responses that they will not allow their elderly parents to live in an old folks' home. The reasons were: first, filial piety which dictates that every child has the obligation to look after their elderly parents, and it is a shame to let the parents live in a place

other than their homes. Second, they can be a source of knowledge, wisdom and advice for the children and grandchildren. Third, they can provide excellent companionship to all. This form of family cohesion in extended family is more important to the respondents than the American cultural value for individualism, privacy, convenience, and independence.

The importance of family roles could be exemplified by Mr. and Mrs. L's experience. Mrs. L preferred to devote her time to the family looking after their welfare rather than seek a career for herself. Mr. L regarded the loss of one source of family income as inconsequential when compared to the needs of his children. He prefers to have less family income and learn to adjust to lower consumption level rather than missing out on parental involvement in educating, and meeting the social and emotional needs of his children. To him "the family comes first. Period." This sentiment is also revealed by the rest of the adult respondents that if they were financially comfortable, the mother would prefer to stay home to cater to the needs of the family. All the respondents felt that there is a duty, an obligation to look after the welfare of the family. Individual need and welfare as practised by Americans are secondary to the family. The preference of the female adult respondents to be homemakers will be frowned upon by some Americans and considered as the subservience and oppression of women, gender discrimination, and loss of female individualism and independence. From the Chinese perspective, there will be no perception of a "loss" but a "gain" for all concerned as it is merely a division of responsibilities.

From the responses of the participants, it can be concluded that they prefer to retain the Chinese cultural pattern of specific family roles and do not

want to be in a situation where they have no say or influence over the welfare of their children, at least before they are married. The family role responsibility has been viewed by Mr. K, Mr. L, Mrs. K and Mrs. T as contributing to a stable family unit. Mr. K has given a hint of the eventual loss of this privilege to have the right of final say in family matters when his children grow up and become "Americanized" in their way of life.

Respect for Elders

Another distinct difference in interpersonal relationship discussed by all respondents was the attribute of respect for adults and authority by children. All the eight respondents felt there is an obvious absence of respect in many Americans, especially among school children for teachers and adults. All the three student respondents have first-hand experience in school. Mrs. L and Mrs. T noticed that American children talk back to their parents and use inappropriate language. Mrs. T believes that generally, the lack of respect in American homes and community for adults by children was transferred to the schools resulting in students being rude, insubordinate, and disrespectful of teachers. This researcher was told by some elderly colleagues that American children were not this disrespectful of adults 40 or more years ago. What could have caused this change? This researcher thinks the possible cause or causes could be due to a combination of the following : family breakdown, liberal attitudes, individualism, abuse of child protective laws, abuse of democracy, changing economic conditions, lack of good role models, ineffective consequences and punishments. However, from the Chinese perspective,

there could be another possible cause--the tradition of respect in interpersonal relationship within the family. In the families of all three cases, this researcher noticed that there is a respectful address system when the children converse with adults. Adults are not addressed by names but by titles such as "uncle," "aunt," "brother," "sister," etc. Only persons of the same generation or of a higher social rank could address another by names.

On the other hand, some of the adult respondents found there are many adult Americans who are very polite in the way they greet each other with "Hi", or "Good day". This form of civility could be construed as an excellent form of acknowledging another person. However, this researcher likes to add a word of caution lest other Chinese immigrants be disappointed by this form of civility. The friendly greeting of "Hi" in America do not necessarily imply a desire for conversation. Among the Chinese, greetings are taken to mean an initiation for communication.

All of the respondents, either by direct mention or implication, do not find the American children's lack of respect worthy of emulation. They prefer their children continue following their cultural trait of respect for elders as Mr. K believes strongly that Americans also like to be shown respect.

Individualism

The cultural trait of individualism has been inculcated early in the life of American children when babies are encouraged to sleep alone in their own room, given independence in their teens and expected to be able to look after themselves. Mrs. T feels that this individualistic feeling may be

disadvantageous. She feels this can lead children to become self-centered, and think of themselves only. Mrs. K, Mrs. T and Mr. L think that American children are given too many rights and some of them abuse these rights. Chee too finds his American friends too individualistic.

Despite the individualistic outlook in life, as a result of the freedom they have, some respondents noticed the contradiction in American character. Mrs. K thinks Americans are generous and are willing to be involved in many charitable organizations. She considers the American society a "giving society" where chattels and money are donated freely. Wern too finds his American peers more accepting of differences and are more friendly toward each other.

Individualism is a trait all of the respondents do not want to emulate. This researcher finds all the respondents are very family-oriented, including the three student respondents and it is not surprising that they do not accept the concept of individualism readily. On the other hand, their strong family-orientation may not prepare them well to lead an independent life.

Personality Traits

There are certain American personality traits some respondents found attractive and thought worthy of emulation. Mr. K likes the forthrightness of Americans, which he described as an avoidance of "beating around the bush or keeping [dissatisfaction] in the heart." The second trait is punctuality which Mr. K and Mrs. T think worthy of emulation. The third is the helpfulness of the American people where Mr. and Mrs. K find to have made them feel welcome and accepted. Mr. K related how American people readily extended help

whenever they can, but if they are unable to help, they will provide references. Mrs. T, too, finds Americans will try their best to help even though, at times, they may provide the wrong information. Mrs. T, Wern, Elwin and Chee like the fourth personality trait of having a positive attitude toward life. The spirit of optimism and a "can do" attitude tend to make one more confident and capable.

However, the consumption pattern of Americans living on credit is thought to be strange for all of the adult respondents, who prefer to consume only if they have the ready money to do so. The respondents are more thrifty when compared to their American counterparts. Generally, the consumption pattern of Chinese is conservative. They find it more comfortable to postpone their enjoyment of goods and services until they have saved enough money rather than to live on credit. This accounts for the high saving rate in the economy wherever there is a high proportion of Chinese residents. The low savings in the American economy reflect the consumption pattern of American people.

Mr. K, Mrs. T and Wern feel that the Chinese belief on diligence (effort) as a means to achieve success should be retained and strengthened despite the general belief in American culture that success is due more to ability than effort. Mr. K and Wern believe the strong determination of Chinese to achieve their goal should be perpetuated among the Chinese, as well as the indomitable spirit of meeting challenges in life. They, too, believe that the spirit of self-reliance and the ability to take risk in life as important to success and should be retained by the Chinese.

There are some personality traits among the Chinese that the respondents feel should be rejected. Mr. K feels that some Chinese are selfish

as they care too much for their families only. Can this be the reason why most of the Chinese do not actively participate in community activities? Mr. K feels that this is a contributory cause of the lack of unity among Chinese in politics.

Mrs. T and Wern feel that generally, Chinese are narrow-minded and are suspicious of the motives of another individual. Besides this, they find that many Chinese are too arrogant with their sense of superiority and are reluctant to learn from others. Mrs. T mentioned the bad habit of a large number of Chinese indulging in gambling. She also noticed that many Chinese are too money-minded, so much so that monetary wealth is used as a yardstick of success. Elwin feels that the superstitious beliefs of the Chinese as embodied in many of the Taoist practices such as throwing rice before entering a new house or seeking the advice of people who went into a trance to heal sickness should be discarded. Mrs. L, too, likes this superstitious belief be rejected by the Chinese.

Discipline

All of the respondents agreed that there appears to be a lack of discipline and respect for elders and authority in the general American society and in schools. Mrs. K finds American parents not very capable of controlling their children. Mrs. T's experience with an American couple in school admitting that they have lost control of their son supported Mrs. K's observation. All of the adult respondents, explained the loss of control by American parents over their children's discipline as due to "too many rights being given to the children" and the abuse of child protective laws to threaten their parents. Mrs. K finds that this

law has deprived the right of parents to discipline their children. Thus, "they are helpless and do not know what to do. This caused the American children to become wild."

This researcher has been told that occasionally, Asian children also used the tactic of quoting the child protective laws to threaten their parents. Some people in the Asian community believe there is a necessity to tighten the laws from abuse by children and to distinguish clearly between what constitutes abuse and discipline. The question is, who will discipline children better--the State or the parents? Recent court cases speak to vast differences in cultural perceptions of what constitutes good discipline and the duty and right of Asian parents to discipline their children. Some disciplinary measures taken by Asian parents have been interpreted as violations of these American laws resulting in imprisonment of adults and confiscation of children from their families.

All of the student respondents felt the discipline in schools is poor compared to Malaysian schools. They find students coming to class late, making noise in class, talking back to teachers, engaging in verbal abuse of other students, and bullying. They are able to get away with it. Elwin feels that some teachers are scared of the students. Mrs. T finds teachers and school administrators helpless or do not care about discipline. Chee found the attitude of American parent to whom he reported the son taking his bicycle home without permission as not overtly concern that it was morally wrong. Mrs. T speculated several reasons why discipline is a problem in American schools. She feels that school teachers and administrators are worried about litigation from parents; teachers and administrators too permissive; high tolerance level

of indiscipline; or teachers and school administrators do not care much about indiscipline.

The different perceptions between who and what on discipline appear to be culturally-determined . Discipline in school is a reflection of the American society's current debate over crime and punishment and the inability of society to control the escalation of criminal activities. America's tolerance and handling of indiscipline in the general society provide the larger context with which indiscipline in schools can be understood.

Sacrifice

All of the respondents, by their immigration to America exhibited their sense of sacrifice of their present personal comfort for the future well-being of their children. Mr. K and Mrs. T have to leave their stable and established career, familiar surrounding, family members in Malaysia in exchange for an uncertain existence, jobs, housing, and social dislocations. Mr. K, Mrs. K and Mrs. T refusal to pursue further academic qualifications is due, among other reasons, to their attempt to save enough money to finance their children's education in college. All of the respondents are willing to engage in long-term investment in their children. This is not surprising as Chinese are patient enough to undertake sufferings first (to taste bitterness) before enjoying success (sweetness later). Mr. K and Mrs. T consider this as the ability of parents to engage in long-term planning for the future. Mrs. K shows her uncompromising attitude by declaring that, even if she has to sacrifice for the family by "washing toilet" to earn a living for the family, she will readily do so. [In Malaysia, to work

as a toilet cleaner is considered one of the lowest status job that only people who are in the worst of economic straits would engage in it. Here, it is used as a metaphor to emphasize the measure of her sacrifice.] This is one Chinese cultural trait that all of the respondents want to retain, besides others such as respect for elders, close family unit, filial piety, self-reliance, and diligence.

Social Conventions

All of the adult respondents find American social rules and etiquette governing the relationship between people as too formal. They feel uncomfortable with the conventions, and at times, withdrew from participation. Mr. L declined to participate in social gathering where children were excluded. Mr. K learned that each time he wanted to meet with friends he has to make appointments. This is completely different from the Malaysian case where friends can visit each other any time without giving prior notice. As Mr. K described it, he can visit his friends "even [when the friend is] in the midst of a bath." Mrs. T has to be very cautious with what she says, otherwise Americans may feel an invasion of privacy. She has to constantly balance the nature and extent of her conversation so as not to project the impression that she is either too unfriendly or loose-mouthed. She finds the social etiquette too "cold and distant." Mr. L feels that at times, friendship with American friends to be somewhat superficial based entirely on common interests.

Mr. L's observation of the exclusion of children in social gathering as further evidence of the social pattern of Americans wanting to have a good time for themselves. This is in contrast to that of the Chinese social behavior where

they want to include and introduce children to the adult world as mentioned in the literature review. This researcher's experience has shown that very often, wedding dinners, Chinese reunion dinners, grandparents' birthday dinners, social visits to houses or other adult gatherings have the presence of children.

The three female adult respondents expressed their uneasiness with the common American practice of hugging and kissing on the cheek between members of the opposite sex. Mrs. K felt it was totally inappropriate initially because she was a married woman and it was also morally incorrect. However, after living in America for the past six years, she feels her reaction against it is not as strong now. Could this perhaps be due to the adjustment she is undergoing in a new culture? Overall the three female respondents and Mr. K feel this custom conflict with their cultural value and try to avoid it whenever they could.

Mrs. T noticed the difference in social expectation when visiting friends for the first time in America. There was no need to bring any gifts along. In Chinese custom, especially when visiting someone for the first time in the house, or an ailing friend, one would bring along a simple gift. On the other hand, Mr. K found that when attending parties, one was expected to bring gifts in America. To the respondents, the cultural expectations and the exceptions must be quite confusing.

Others

One of the most important reasons given by all respondents for their immigration was the race-based discrimination policy of the Malaysian

government. The respondents feel more relaxed living under American democracy and there is less institutional discrimination in America. Discrimination of all forms--racial, ethnic, religious, gender, age and handicaps are unlawful in America but sanctioned by the Malaysia constitution. The American bureaucracy is perceived to be fair, more humane and practical. Mrs. K was impressed with the manner the school bureaucracy functions. Her children were registered in schools without much fuss, suspicion or bureaucratic arrogance that she has been subjected to in Malaysia.

Mr. L is fascinated with the manner the centralized and decentralized governments work. He approved of the manner each school district made decisions where local citizens were consulted and issues debated. Parents were invited to attend the activities organized by schools and community.

Mr. L noticed that Americans are more law-abiding, citing as examples the low incidence of bribing of police officers, obeying traffic laws, maintaining good road manners and observing littering laws. He feels that Chinese should emulate the positive attitude of Americans. On the other hand, the bad habit of the Chinese in disregarding traffic laws could lead to stereotyping of Chinese and can become a cause of discrimination against them. He feels this should be rejected.

Impact of the American Culture on Respondents

In the process of responding to the different cultural practices in the United States, all of the participants have undergone subtle transformation in

their beliefs and behavior. Each respondent experienced different type and rate of transformations in their interactions with American culture and publics.

Mrs. K and Mrs. T felt that they have become more independent and confident in their outlook in life. Mrs. K has grown from a docile homemaker to a busy businesswoman and she is confident that she can survive in American society on her own. Mrs. T has become more assertive, blunt and willing to speak her mind without having second thought of whether it is "nice" to do so. ["Nice" in Malaysian context implies the habit of reflecting before one speaks so as not to hurt the feelings of the other party; debating its appropriateness and speculating whether what is to be spoken may appear overtly aggressive or ill-mannered.] She also revealed that she has downplayed the modesty trait (humility) of the Chinese. She sometimes indulged in self-praise and took pride in telling others what she has accomplished. Wern too found that he has become more talkative. This researcher agrees that such changes are inevitable when the respondents are exposed to such influences daily for even a "lie that is told a thousand times becomes the truth." This would be a positive step forward toward their greater acculturation in American society.

In child-rearing practices, Mrs. T revealed she has become less strict with her children and tend to give them more decision-making power. This is a significant change from her previous position where she attempted to make all decisions for her children. Mr. L has also questioned his own authoritarian approach toward his son which resulted in reduced communications between them. Mr. K predicted that it will not be long when he loses his right of final say as head of household in his family due to the acculturation of his children.

Wern has become more open-minded to different ideas, more liberal in his thinking and less rigid in his mannerisms. He has also stated that social ability is as important as academic ability in America. This is a significant departure from the Malaysian value placed solely on academic achievement. Wern's attitude toward diligence is further strengthened when he can relate to those American students who are academically brilliant in school. Chee said that he has not much problem adjusting as he has been exposed to American culture when young. It is significant to note that Chee migrated to America when he was in grade one while Elwin and Wern migrated when they were older. In the process of acculturation, it is easier for Chee to do so than Elwin and Wern as most of his cultural foundations were not yet well-defined.

Elwin finds himself becoming less religious and he does not seem to believe in any religion. He believes that Chinese traditions related to superstitions should be rejected.

Generational Conflict

In their attempt to adjust to the new culture and society, did the adult respondents encounter differences between them and their adolescent children that were so wide as to constitute a conflict? Did the stress and tension in preferences, beliefs, peer influence, new norms and values between American and Chinese culture cause conflict? All of the respondents acknowledged that there were no serious conflicts that could cause a breakdown in family relationships. However, there were many cases of differences of opinion. All of the adult respondents reported that, compared to American children, their

adolescents behave well and are compliant to parental suggestions and expectations. The attitude of the adolescents can be exemplified by Chee's acknowledgement that "parents are in charge, whatever they say, goes." Chee, when confronted with indecision always finds it easy to comply with what the parents suggested. All the adolescents admitted that although there were differences in opinion with their parents, they still followed their parents' advice. This was confirmed by Mr. L who was inclined to believe that his son might not have agreed with him on many occasions, but did not make an issue out of it. However, he acknowledged that his daughter tend to disagree openly with him.

None of the adolescents are in the habit of staying out late at night, smoking, drinking, having sex early, doing drugs or mixing with delinquent friends. They all have closer relationships with their mothers than their fathers. They perceived their fathers as too strict and hot-tempered.

All of the adolescents are respectful of teachers and adults and the parents do not receive any complaint from the school on their children's behavior.

Abandon Culture in order to Succeed in America?

All of the respondent were unanimous in their answers that there is no need for them to denounce their culture or to become completely assimilated into American society to succeed. However, there appears to be some qualifications of what abandonment means. Mr. L felt that at times there is the necessity to be assimilated to a certain extent so as to blend into the American society but not to be devoid totally of Chinese culture and characteristics. Mrs. L

felt that if one were to function as a top executive one has to behave like Americans to a certain extent but not to totally "act white" to succeed. Mrs. K thought that sometimes one has to temporary abandon the insistence on practising the culture such as speaking Mandarin in front of customers because they might misconstrue the intention. Mr. L cited the example of Chinese girls from China going to the extreme of wanting to lose their culture completely in order to succeed by marrying Americans. Mrs. T felt that if Chinese were to abandon their culture, it has to be on a voluntary basis without the lure of material gains, peer or societal pressure. It has to be a natural process.

Several reasons were given by the respondents as to why a Chinese need not have to abandon his/her culture in order to succeed in America. The reasons given were as follows:

- that America is a free country and there is no need to suppress ones culture;
- no matter how you want to dissociate yourself, Americans will always regard you as Chinese based on physical attributes;
- American people are magnanimous to tolerate people from different cultures.

The assimilation issue is a sensitive one to all respondents, reminiscent of the situation in Malaysia where the government has proclaimed a National Culture Policy specifying that all elements of the Malaysian culture must be based on Malay culture. This lack of cultural democracy is one of the reasons why some of the respondents left the country. However, the situation in America is different as there is no legislated national culture policy to coerce her citizens towards total assimilation of minorities. This researcher feels there will be more

voluntary acceptance of American culture than the case in Malaysia due to an absence of coercion. This is evidenced by the fact that inter-racial marriages are not subjected to degradation by society (except by racists), there is respect for individual differences, tolerance of people with different lifestyles, presence of equitable laws and independent judiciary, individual rights and the general American open-mindedness. This could lead to a bicultural Chinese-American population or eventually to a transmutation of American culture.

Racial Discrimination

The issue of racial discrimination is sensitive to all the respondents, especially so for Mr. K, Mrs. K and Mrs. T as they have been subjected to the government's race-based policies. Mr. L did not suffer as much in comparison to the three adult respondents but has witnessed the invidious effect of such policies. Mrs. L was spared much of the racial discrimination because she was not in a competitive situation for further education, employment in government agencies or business. Racial discrimination was the most important reason for their migration from Malaysia. They are aware that the United States is not entirely free from racial problems as the glass ceiling, racial riots, prejudice against Jews, hate crimes against Asians, and the varied unpleasant experiences in employment, treatment by police, and social discrimination based on race at the personal level are being practised daily. However, the most significant difference in racial discrimination between Malaysia and the United States is that it is legal in the former while it is unconstitutional in the latter. Mr. K revealed that he did not personally suffer racial discrimination in

America yet, but feels that discrimination in America tend to be very subtle so much so that one may not really feel it. He feels this can be even more widespread than thought. However, Mr. K, Mr. L and Mrs. T acknowledged that racial discrimination in America is comparatively mild and they feel the American society is fairer. They speculated that this could be due to the greater sense of shame and stronger sensitivity and commitment to justice by mainstream Americans. This researcher is able to empathize with their anxiety when the continuing debate on affirmative action in admission to universities and colleges subjected Chinese to racial discrimination. Their sense of frustration would be understandable as they have just escaped from the racial restrictions to educational opportunity in Malaysia.

Four out of the five adult respondents listed the following acts of racial discrimination in Malaysia. First, there is a quota set on admission to colleges and universities. Scholarships and stipend for education are allocated to Malay students regardless of their economic standing and academic results. Mr. K and Mr. L were excluded even though they were more destitute than many of the Malay recipients. Second, public trusts were established for the benefits of the Malays from general taxes paid by all racial groups; business licences are denied to Chinese. Third, there are quotas set for employment, preservice and inservice training of candidates into government services. Fourth, a national culture policy was declared unilaterally that only Malay culture can be the basis of Malaysian culture, no non-Malay cultural activities were to be included in international gatherings. Fifth, all racial laws could not be challenged in the courts of laws. [Instances of racial discrimination were also committed in many other instances not mentioned by the respondents. Some examples are like

establishing special schools for only the Malays with public funds; public issues of corporate shares were to be set aside for the Malays before opening to public subscriptions; constructions of temples and churches were restricted; and Malays could preach their religion to non-Malays but not vice-versa.]

Problems and Coping Strategies

In migrating to a new economic, social and cultural environment from one that was familiar and stable, some of the respondents encountered many challenges and problems in their attempt to adjust to the new society. The problems they encountered were overcome by their coping strategies, however. Problems are inevitable and by themselves do not become critical in life but the manner of solving the problems and coping with them are vital to the continued well-being and happiness of the new immigrants.

Racial Prejudice

As discussed previously, America has its racial discrimination problem. To Mr. L, racial discrimination was a non-issue in Malaysia as well as in the United States. Thus, he did not have to think about how to cope with it. His philosophy is not to try to resolve such an intractable problem but just to live with it. This could be due to his special circumstance as he had been working for a western multi-national company that had no politics factored into its company policy. However, Mr. K reacted differently in the face of racial discrimination in Malaysia. His coping strategy was to work even harder so as

to compensate for the color of his skin. When the racial discrimination became so blatant for him, he coped with it by immigrating to the United States. Mrs. K believes strongly that there is no point complaining and whining about it. She prefers to take action and to become independent by working for herself in America.

At school, Mrs. T advised her son not to judge a person according to race but to evaluate him/her as an individual. Many social issues, including racial discrimination are regularly discussed at her home in America so that her children can have a better perspective of the issue.

Elwin felt that he missed a school award due to racial discrimination. He consoled himself by aiming his target for other awards that he could compete for instead of lamenting and dwelling on this lost opportunity.

Mrs. L advised her daughter to believe in herself that she could write instead of allowing herself be overcome with grief when the essay she submitted to the teacher was returned with the accusation that she plagiarized the essay. Mrs. L was suspicious that this could be racially motivated. Mrs. L promised to request a conference with the teacher and principal if the problem was not solved.

Mrs. L, Mrs. K and Mrs. K's advised their children to avoid potential problems that could arise from inter-racial marriage by not getting involved in it. They were more inclined to believe that inter-racial marriage would present more problems than same-race marriage. They were prepared to use persuasion to cope with this situation, if it ever arose. However, they were not blind to the fact that many inter-racial marriages were even more successful than same-race marriage as occurred in Mrs. L's and Mrs. T's family.

Four out of five adult respondents suggested several ways they could take personally to help reduce racial discrimination in the United States. Mr. K suggested that the best way was not to practise it against other races. Mr. L thought that care should be taken in daily behaviors of the Chinese so as not to provide Americans opportunity to confirm the stereotype that they already held against Chinese like disobeying traffic and other laws in the country. Mrs. K and Mrs. T felt that education would be a valuable tool to combat racial discrimination by making school children aware of cultural differences, inculcating racial tolerance, and fostering of intercultural understanding. They could also explain the cultural practices to their colleagues, neighbors and friends as they believed that ignorance was the main cause of racial discrimination. Mrs. K suggested that social gatherings in sports, religious meetings, potluck, and festivities could go a long way to reduce racial discrimination.

This researcher felt that the building a truly multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-lifestyles society have the best chance of success in America, especially in California. The preconditions for such optimism could be seen in the practice of American democracy, the relatively small number of demagogues and fanatics, the presence of well-educated, wise and independent-thinking population, the acceptance of inter-racial marriages and the open-mindedness of the general population.

Interpersonal Relationships

While in America, all of the respondents encountered differences in social conventions that necessitated certain coping strategies so as to negotiate a positive environment for all concerned. Mr. K, Mrs. K, and Mrs. T found that there were too many social etiquette, rules and regulations to accommodate. Mrs. K found Americans have difficulty understanding her when she spoke due to her accent. She had to speak slowly in order to enable the listener to understand what was spoken.

Mrs. K and Mrs. T found the common practice of hugging and kissing uncomfortable especially with American men. Their first coping strategy would be to avoid getting into the situation or tried just to shake hands. However, through time, Mrs. K found that she was slowly getting accustomed to it.

From Mrs. T's experience, she found that at times, Americans do not like to discuss certain topics which were considered private. There were issues when perceived from Chinese world view necessitate actions as a show of concern but could be interpreted as meddling in private affairs by Americans. As a result, she felt that it was difficult for her to develop feelings of warmth and concern with Americans. She was also uncertain as to the reaction of some Americans she talked to. She coped with this by conversing less and keeping a cautious distance with Americans lest her action may be considered as "busybody" or, in the other extreme, "aloof." She also limited her talk to topics that were absolutely necessary, otherwise, she would just keep quiet.

Mrs. T observed that at social gathering, especially for dinner there were too many rules on table manners which she found stifling. She solved her

problem by not attending such gathering. Similarly, withdrawal was also a coping strategy used by Mr. L when he found that many social gatherings excluded children from participating. Mr. K also avoided such invitation to meal as most Americans went Dutch, which he was not used to. In Malaysia, whoever did the invitation would also take the responsibility to settle the bill.

Children's Adjustment Problems

Mr. L commented that the children encountered more difficulties in adjustment to the new culture/society as they were expected to function in two cultures--Chinese culture at home and American culture in school and society. Mr. K noticed that his children began to talk back and argue with him shortly after arriving in America. He had to advise and explain to his children the Confucianist philosophy of life.

Mrs. K was asked by his children for pay when doing household chores. Mrs. K rebutted that if she had to pay them, then they had also to reciprocate by paying for the food, lodging and care she had given them. She tried to reason with them by relating the situation in Malaysia when they did not have to perform any household chores as she was a full-time homemaker and the father's single income was sufficient to meet their needs. She explained the changing conditions in America and reasoned with her children the cultural differences between Chinese and American families.

Mr. K was apprehensive that his children might be influenced by bad companies. He resorted to close scrutiny of all their friends, observe their movements and regulate the time of mixing with their friends. Hanging out

during the night or visiting pool halls were strictly forbidden. The best strategy was to keep them at home and to always discuss with them about the dangers of staying out in the streets.

At School

At school, many coping strategies were suggested by the adult respondents for their children to follow. In case of quarrel or misunderstanding with other peers, Mr. K advised his children not to argue or confront but to walk away. Informing the teachers was the most common coping strategy suggested by all of the adult respondents except Mr. L as his children did not discuss their problems with him. Mrs. T advised her son to assess for themselves the situation and to identify whether the problem involved personal belief or principles and to act accordingly.

When Elwin was teased by his peers, he ignored the teasing. He took the stand of trying to "be myself and be nice to others" as a strategy to avoid problems. Chee handled the teasing by ignoring it too and in addition, he continued to play with those who teased him. Mrs. L had also advised her children to think of themselves as better than those Americans who teased them. She consoled her children by informing that American children did not understand Chinese culture. She advised them to "let it [the teasing] go in one ear and come out the other."

To tackle the problem of bullying in school, Chee sometimes sat next to his friends. Wern felt by making more friends and mixing with his friends would

avoid the bullying. Mrs. T had also requested for conferences with the school counsellor and the bullies' parents to resolve the problem.

When Wern found that he was rejected by some American peers, he resolved to make more Asian friends although it was not looked upon as in the best interest of his acculturation to American life.

When Elwin and Chee initially entered school, they were scared of not being able to communicate in English. They had to cope with this by working extra hard to be at par with the other peers. When Chee was involved in verbal fights with his classmates, he resorted to using Malay and Chinese.

In order to adjust to the school culture, Wern employed the strategy of patience and allowed himself to be "absorbed by the influences and over time I got use to them."

Other Problems

When Mrs. K first arrived, she did not know that hanging clothes outside the apartment was forbidden by law and she was astonished. However, through the advice and consultation with neighbors, she understood the practice and duly complied. Mr. K was apprehensive when he first arrived. He relied heavily on his own observations, consulting friends and neighbors and imitating the actions of other Americans.

Chinese Lunar New Year was a "non-affair" in America and no public holidays were declared unlike in Malaysia, where it was celebrated nation-wide with a week-long school holidays for the children. As no school holiday was

allocated, Mr. and Mrs. K resorted to declaring their own holiday and the children stayed home.

When Mrs. K wanted to start her business, she had no friends to turn to for advice. Using her own ingenuity, she made full use of the directory to call up all agencies which she thought relevant until she managed to contact the correct agency for information on setting up a second-hand goods store.

All of the respondents appeared to react to the problems engendered as a result of their immersion in a new culture with different coping strategies. It was through such coping strategies, accommodation and adjustment that the new immigrants could negotiate for themselves a positive and productive existence in the United States.

Gains and Losses from Migration

In making their decision to migrate to the United States, all of the respondents were aware of the advantages and disadvantages of immigration. It was obvious that some of the advantages they anticipated were inclined to be in the distant future while some of the disadvantages are those they have to suffer at the present.

Educational opportunity for their children had been cited by all of the respondents as one of the most important reasons for immigration. They were determined that they did not want their children to suffer the same fate they had undergone or the fate that had befallen family members, friends or neighbors. They felt that the American education system can offer their children the best they could hope for--wide choice of courses, thousands of colleges to select

from, chance of learning the most advance technology in the world, financial aids and most of all, the freedom from racial quotas. The educational opportunities available in America are like "manna" falling from heaven, especially for the Chinese from Malaysia where they are subjected to all forms of racial discrimination in education such as admission quota, denial of choice of courses, Hobson's choice in the medium of instruction at the secondary level and outmoded curriculum.

Mr. K felt the deprivation 10 years in the most productive years of a person's life will "handicapped" that person forever in terms of their lost opportunity for training, employment, higher education, work, life experiences and lost income due to the racial policy of the Malaysian government which was enforced since 1970 and is still in operation today.

All of the adult respondents experienced all forms of freedom in the United States which were not possible in Malaysia, especially the freedom of speech without fear of being charged and imprisoned under the Internal Security Act. However, this freedom of speech in America is not absolute as indicated by Mr. L who warned that everyone can speak on almost any topics/he likes but there is no guarantee that s/he would not be killed by someone due to the "freedom to bear arms."

Another advantage of immigration to the United States is the greater economic opportunity as Mr. L did not experience discrimination in his business. The only constraint he felt is the amount of capital he has for investment. All the respondents felt that they are better off here in America than in Malaysia. From Mrs. K's experience, she revealed that it was relatively easy to apply for a business licence from the American government agency. She is

very satisfied with the positive and supportive gestures of the licensing agency. This is a diametrically opposite experience in Malaysia, where Chinese applying for license would first be subjected to screening to determine whether the particular type of licence is forbidden by law to be issued to a Chinese; second, the tough competition to obtain such licence; third, corruption; fourth, whether you had Malays as co-owners, and many other obstacles. Mr. and Mrs. K felt that their real income is higher in America than in Malaysia.

Mr. L and Mrs. T believed that they and their children have gained from knowing how different society functions and how democracy is practised in America. Mr. L felt that migrating to America has opened his mind to many life experiences. Mrs. T valued the inter-cultural experience. Mr. L benefitted from the opportunity he has for travelling to other foreign countries and accumulating vast amount of knowledge and skills which he could apply to his business.

All the female respondents felt that they have learned to become more independent and "more confident as a person." Mrs. L experienced a maturing process while Mrs. T has become more assertive and straight forward. Mrs. K has also developed a new confidence in facing any future challenges.

Mrs. T felt her children have gain by having the opportunity to choose another country to settle. Mrs. T felt it is a discharging of her duty as a parent to present her children an alternative educational, political, social and economic system to choose from.

The first loss all of the eight respondents felt was the detachment from their close relatives and friends they left behind in Malaysia. As a consequence, Mr. K felt residing in America is lonely and there is only a small circle of friends. He also felt that he cannot enjoy the luxury of making frequent

visits to his hometown in Malaysia. The trip has to be perhaps once in five years.

Besides missing relatives and friends, Mrs. T has to sacrifice the familiar, easier and more relaxing lifestyle in Malaysia for one full of uncertainties. She has to forfeit a stable and established career in teaching. Mrs. T felt she has to perform more work in America than in Malaysia. Mrs. K too has to sacrifice her easy life as a full-time homemaker for the work in managing her store.

In parent-child relationship, Mr. K forecast that he will soon lose his right of final say as a parent when his children became more Americanized. Mrs. K felt that there has been more quarrel in the family due to the pressure of adjusting to a new environment. She too felt that her usual way of life has changed. She thought of the casual life she had where she could just walked across the street to enjoy a bowl of noodles at the roadside stall.

In weighting all the gains and losses from migrating to the United States, a majority of the adult respondents felt the experience has been a positive one and do not feel regretful about it. However, Mrs. K is ambivalent and she experiences alternating feelings of exuberance and remorse. All of the student respondents appear optimistic and grateful that their parents have made the move to leave Malaysia.

Summary

When comparing the cultural differences between Chinese and Americans, it is immediately obvious that there is a great cultural divide in the areas of interpersonal relationships which involve husband-wife relationship,

parent-child and family relationship, hierarchy of family roles, respect for elders, individualism, and personality traits; discipline of children; role of sacrifice; and particular social conventions. Whatever the differences, they are certainly not a problem in and of themselves. The crucial element is the coping strategies that the respondents used in order to make their stay in America a positive and enriching experience for themselves and the new society. Are the cultural differences so great and intractable that the respondents had a difficult time adjusting? From the responses, the answer is negative.

In discussing the impact of the American culture on the respondents, there appears to be a judicious, selective process of emulating positive American cultural traits and the rejection of the more negative ones. From the responses elicited, all of the respondents are receptive and open-minded to the cultural differences that they knew they had to confront on immigrating to America. It can be said that there has been a psychological preparedness to sieve, reject, and absorb selective cultural influences. Hence, none of them experienced significant cultural shock on entering America.

The new culture and environment did not pose major conflicts between the adult respondents and their adolescent children. Credit should go to the parenting efforts of the adult respondents for imparting positive Chinese cultural traits such as filial piety and respect for elders while closely observing and guiding their children's absorption of American cultural traits.

All of the respondents felt they need not abandon their culture in order to succeed due to the open-mindedness of the American society and the democratic principles they adhered to. There is a rejection of the allegations that racial discrimination and mismatches caused students to fail in school. All

of the respondents affirmed that failures and success are the consequence of one's commitment to diligence rather than the pressures of external forces. Racial discrimination in America pales in comparison to what they had experienced in Malaysia. Hence, it is perceived as an important obstacle to their success in America.

The coping strategies employed by the respondents for themselves as well as suggestions for their children to practise appeared to be successful in eradicating or ameliorating the problems caused by their exposure to American culture. Most of their coping strategies are confined to the realm of interpersonal relationships in the home, school and general society.

The respondents summarized their experiences with new cultural challenges as more positive than negative.

RESEARCH QUESTION # 3

Given the traditional preference for the male over the female gender by the Chinese as manifested in the many forms of gender discrimination, what adjustments concerning gender do new immigrants make?

Throughout Chinese history, the female gender has been discriminated against by society in China. Typically, the tradition has been carried over by the Chinese when they migrated out of China to other parts of the world. This gender discrimination is still evident in China today; males are preferred over females. However, the intensity of this gender discrimination has waned among overseas Chinese, including those in Malaysia. There are several reasons to account for this gender discrimination as well as the declining practice among the Malaysian Chinese.

All of the five adult respondents agreed that there was gender discrimination in Malaysia, but not to the same extent as practised in China. Some of the respondents indicated the degree of gender discrimination was also evident among more traditional Malaysian Chinese than those who were more modernized. From the observations of the researcher in Malaysia, other influences that could result in gender preference were socioeconomic status, level of education, medium of instruction in school, overseas education, family upbringing, environment and the number of children a couple had.

State of Gender Issues in Malaysia

Certain practices, beliefs, and attitudes of the Chinese provide manifestations of gender preference in Malaysian society. Some of these practices are overt while others are covert. However, these manifestations have diminished over time. Lingering practices of gender discrimination can be observed among some Malaysian Chinese, including the respondents.□

Evidence of Gender Discrimination in Malaysia

Mr. K observed that some couples kept on begetting children until they had a male. There were occasions when a couple had given birth to ten or more girls continuously and decided to stop only after they were successful in getting a son, and some couples just gave up without having one son. Couples would not want to have a big family if they had an early success of a balanced number of sons and daughters.

Mrs. T related the experience of a female colleague that when she gave birth to a son on her fourth pregnancy, was given an acre of land, jewelry and money by her mother-in-law, while her husband gave her a car. When she gave birth to the first three girls, no such presents were given.

Mrs. L's brother had the opportunity to continue his education at the college level while her first-born sister in the family was not given this opportunity. However, in the case of Mrs. T everyone was given the opportunity regardless of gender.

Mr. L and Mrs. T observed that parents usually bequeathed property and businesses to their sons but not to daughters. Mrs. T's mother gave the only house she had to be shared by her two brothers, while none of the daughters was given a share of the house. Additionally, Mrs. T's brother was given money as a down payment for a house by their mother, but this offer was not extended to daughters in the family.

Chinese parents found it uncomfortable to live with a son-in-law because of social pressures, such as put-downs by neighbors, but it was acceptable if the parents were to live with their daughter-in-law. If the parents had sons but were not living with them, their children would be looked down upon by others. It was a mark of shame, the reason being that the son was supposed to shoulder the responsibility of looking after the elders, as related by Mrs. T.

In Mrs. L and Mrs. T's homes, the males were exempted from doing household chores. However, it was different for Mr. L as his parents required the males as well as the females to perform household chores.

Mrs. T observed that most boys, after failing the standardized public examination, were usually given a second chance through enrollment in private schools, but there was no such second chance for girls. This was due to the fact that private schools incurred monetary expenses. There was also the general expectation that girls would soon be married off and there was no urgent necessity to invest in their education.

Social pressures in the form of idle and sarcastic talk were directed toward the females if they failed to produce male heirs, implying the problem was caused by the female. Mrs. T was told by a lady in the maternity ward, when she (Mrs. T) complained that her third born was a boy that she was lucky

as she was the one who did the complaining, not her in-laws. If the situation were reversed and she had three daughters instead, the husband's relatives would shower her with grumbles, complaints and subject her to mental harassment. This is an obvious case of double standards in the Malaysian Chinese community.

Gender preference can also be detected by the attitudes of the parents when they discuss family situations. More often than not the son will become the main topic of conversation. Mrs. T observed that her mother bestowed more pride in her brother's achievement than in hers. The researcher observed that the practice of only giving daughters away for adoption was quite common during the forties and fifties in Malaysia, which was not mentioned by the respondents. Interestingly, the most active perpetrators of such gender discrimination were the females themselves. Mrs. T observed that her mother was more conscious of gender bias than her father. The researcher has had personal experience of his grandmother's bias in the treatment of his uncle and aunts. When his grandmother died, all property was given to the uncle although he did not contribute to the purchase of the property. None of the aunts were given a share of the property. This coincides with the findings in America that female teachers, either consciously or unconsciously, practise male gender discrimination in the classroom. This appears to be an example of the cultural similarity between the Malaysian and American attitudes on gender discrimination.

Changing Attitudes Towards Gender Discrimination in Malaysia

The practice of gender discrimination in Malaysia was inherited from China and thereafter underwent gradual change over time. Whenever cultural practices are transferred from elsewhere, they are subjected to change because of the new social, cultural and economic environments and the passage of time. Hence, Mrs. T noticed that baby girls have not been given up for adoption in the past three decades in Malaysia. In the forties and earlier, Chinese baby girls were given for adoption, but not baby boys. Reasons accounting for the decline in this practice is the education of the girls which resulted in delayed marriages, time spent in the pursuit of higher education, career demands and family planning.

The attitude of Malaysian parents toward the female has changed as the girls proved to be more homely and were more concerned with the welfare of their parents. They tended to visit and care for the elderly parents more than the sons. Mrs. K commented that when "the boys get married, we don't see them anymore."

As Malaysian women began to receive more education, they also became more economically active and were able to contribute to the family income. The parental attitudes toward the female gender changed accordingly in Malaysia, as observed by Mrs. T.

As more Chinese girls received an education in a rapidly changing economy, with the accompanying liberal influences from westernization, the Chinese community was very susceptible to the new influences and their attitudes toward female gender discrimination started to decline in Malaysia.

Reasons for Gender Preference

Most practices of gender preference were tradition-based, devoid of logical explanations. First, all the of the adult respondents cited the social rule specifying that only the male heirs could inherit the family genealogy through their last name. The cultural belief was that whenever a female was married, she was married out of the family and she had to assume the last name of her husband. The traditional practice considered the preservation and continuation of the last name of the family as almost the sacred duty of each generation. This account for the obsession of some Chinese family wanting a male heir. If a male heir was not produced, then the family tree would be terminated and this spelled the "doom" for the family. Some of them would go to such an extent as to persuade their son-in-law to marry into the family rather than their daughter marrying out so that the first-born male could assume the last name of the wife's family. Hence, a "surrogate" grandson was created to continue the family tree. This would definitely appear ridiculous from an American cultural perspective.

Mrs. K and Mrs. T referred to the role of hierarchy in Chinese family, which places the responsibility for the care of the elderly on the males. Hence, they would inherit all the wealth and property of the family. Related to this family role, Mrs. L and Mrs. T stated that the males were supposed to be the breadwinners of the family and had to leave the house to earn a livelihood while the female family role was to look after the household and to educate the children. Traditional family conventions mandated such a division of roles. However, it should be borne in mind that present-day preference by wives to stay home might not be adhering to tradition, which had the appearance of

oppression, but by conscious voluntary choice and other circumstances like the earning power of the female. This conscious choice is evidenced by Mrs. L staying home. Mrs. T had also indicated if her family was financially strong, she would like to stay home looking after the family.

In the agrarian economy of China, as the males were endowed with greater physical strength than the females, it was natural that males were favored over the female. Mr. L assumed that it was God's creation that both sexes were endowed differently that led to the preference of the males over the female where perhaps physical strength is concerned.

Consequences of Higher Education for Women in Malaysia

In Malaysia, there were certain consequences that women had to confront when they pursued higher education. These consequences represented trade-offs for the women. Four out of the five adult respondents acknowledged that women would get married late or might not marry at all. Mr. K commented that it would be difficult for the women to befriend men with a comparable education. [Malaysian Chinese appeared to have an ego problem in that they would prefer to marry someone with lower or same level education with them, but not with someone who had higher education. This singles problem had become such a serious social problem that the Singapore government has had to organize activities for bachelors and computerized matching for them. Singapore is mentioned because the social make-up of its Chinese society is very similar to that in Malaysia.] This could possibly be a reason why some parents did not insist that women pursue higher education.

Additional consequences cited by some of the respondents were as follows: Mrs. T noted that there would be delayed motherhood, while Mr. L felt that if a woman was unmarried, she might have to face the possibility of not having anyone to look after her in old age. Mrs. K thought that women with a higher education might be more stubborn in their behavior.

Respondents' Attitudes towards Gender Discrimination

When comparing the general attitude of Chinese toward gender discrimination from the earlier days in China to Malaysia and then to America, there appears to be a shift in the attitude as reflected by the respondents' answer, as well as some lingering die-hard past preference.

In comparing the changes, Mrs. T described how her grandparent would go off to sleep right after the birth of a baby granddaughter was announced and the ridicule he suffered when out walking with his granddaughter in China. In Malaysia, although the attitude was less extreme, some machismo men would tease those without sons. Mrs. T had also related how women in China were not allowed to receive an education, but her parents were willing to send them to school, and for higher education if they were capable in Malaysia. This answer was also reflected in Mrs. K, and Mr. L's responses. At the least, all of the adult respondents' parents were willing to permit them to study up to a minimum of a secondary education in Malaysia. As for higher education, gender discrimination was obvious in Mrs. L's family where her parents funded the son's education over the daughter, who was the first born in the family. In America, all the four adult respondents who had daughters were willing to send

them to colleges. [Mrs. T had no daughter]. Four out of the five adult respondents were prepared to finance their daughter's education. The only constraint that would apply to all children would be their own motivation, interest and capabilities.

There were different attitudes to the requirement that the males should share household chores with the females. In traditional China, men need not perform household chores. This kind of exemption was also practised in Mrs. T, Mrs. K and Mrs. L's families where the males did not help in doing household chores. However, Mr. L and Mr. K were required to help out in the house, performing chores like cooking, cleaning and keeping the house clean. The early training and experience of participating in household chores probably influenced Mr. L and Mr. K in insisting that their sons share in performing household work in America. Mrs. K concurred with this arrangement. In fact, in Mr. K's household, Elwin noted that his sister was the privileged one in that she was exempted from doing certain chores and was given more toys. Chee commented that his sister was given more attention by the parents than he was.

In terms of occupation, women were engaged in the more traditional occupations in Malaysia like nursing, teaching, secretaryship, clerks and other jobs that did not require much physical strength. However, the number of women engaged in professional occupations, especially non-traditional occupations, was increasing, although at a slow pace in Malaysia. There were women lawyers, architect, engineers, bus drivers, certain military jobs and others. The situation in Malaysia has some similarities to that in American. The difference is that in America there are even more women involved in non-traditional occupations. Mr. L supports women being engaged in non-

traditional occupation, declaring that he saw nothing wrong in women doing so. However, he has his caveat that it would be difficult for the family if a women were to be away from home, 20 days each month, for example.

In terms of intellectual capacity, all of the eight respondents believed that women were at par with men.

Gender Preference in the United States and Malaysia Compared

In comparing gender preferences between Malaysia and the United States, the respondents cited various examples to illustrate their position. They based their perspectives from the individual, social and legal aspects.

In terms of the rights women had in Malaysia, Mrs. K felt that the women in Malaysia enjoyed fewer rights than women in America. She quotes the example that a woman marrying a foreign husband cannot obtain citizenship for him. Furthermore, Mrs. T said that it was more difficult for a woman to divorce her husband, but not the other way round. Mrs. T noticed that in America the rights of women are better protected through legislation. Generally, they were entitled to half the share of all property accumulated by both parties. She felt that women in America were more active, vociferous, and informed of their rights due to the numerous advocacy groups established to meet their needs. Wern agreed that there were many pressure groups organized to fight American gender discrimination. The low status of women's rights in Malaysia could be due to the absence of laws enacted to protect their rights, and that whatever laws were in existence were ineffective. As a result, there were extremely few incidences of legal challenges in the courts of laws to safeguard women's rights

in Malaysia. Furthermore, social, religious and cultural pressures were often used by men to deny or minimize the clamor for equal rights from the women. Mr. L, Mrs. L, Elwin and Wern commented that American women enjoy more rights than women in Malaysia.

Mrs. K, Mr. L and Mrs. T observed that in Malaysia, women were excluded from certain non-traditional occupations like commercial pilots, fire-fighter, certain military position, and truck drivers. Mrs. K and Elwin were aware that women tend to hold lower-level jobs in the Malaysian government than men, and the top executive positions were overwhelmingly occupied by men. Mrs. L did not have personal experience regarding the situation of Malaysian women in occupations, but she had been informed by her friends that women were "second to men" on the occupational ladder. Women in America were seen to be more independent economically with greater occupational choices than Malaysian women. Mr. L, Mrs. L, Elwin and Wern acknowledged that American women enjoy more freedom of occupational choice.

In addition to the lack of legal rights, women in Malaysia were also subjected to individual and social discrimination. They were perceived to receive less respect by the general public and were less able to command respect from subordinates, especially from the men as observed by Mrs. T and Mr. K. The inevitable consequence would be the presence of gender bias in occupational and leadership positions.

Mrs. T found that the prejudiced social attitude in Malaysia put a women divorcee at a disadvantage in terms of remarrying, but not on the men. However, according to Mrs. T gender bias in the United States seems due more to individual bias rather than a bias created by the whole society.

In terms of educational opportunity, Mrs. T mentioned that men in Malaysia still received more chances for education than women. She cited the example of boys failing at public examination being given a second chance to study in private schools and having greater opportunity to be sent overseas to pursue higher education. As the financial expenditure would be exorbitant, usually parents would prefer to finance their sons than daughter. Another reason often cited by parents was the sentiment that there was less chance of obtaining economic returns from their educational investment on women as they would be married out. On the other hand, in America, Mrs. L, Mrs T, Mrs. K and Mr. L felt that women had equal educational opportunity.

Women in America appeared to have more equal rights, enjoying occupational freedom and greater educational opportunity than women in Malaysia. They seemed to be in a more favorable situation. However, Mr. L felt that women in Malaysia were not treated like the weaker sex in the sense that they did not have men open doors for them nor were they offered seats. He implied that Malaysian women need not be led all the way. What he noticed was that Malaysian women would wait for the men to start then they would be able to handle the situation by themselves. Does this imply that the women were more self-reliant or more independent in Malaysia than in America? Or could it imply that the women were placed on a lower scale in the social hierarchy?

Summary

The issue of gender discrimination appears to be subjected to double standards and contradictions among some of the respondents. On one hand, they appeared to be advocates of gender equality and the ability and capability of the females as on par with males (or even to exceed those of the males, in principle). Their own admission of their personal bias was quite revealing. For instance, Mrs. L commented that "if women want to completely play the role of the men, would ruin the family." In these days of women engaging in non-traditional occupations, high intellectual pursuit, equal rights between the sexes and single parenting in America, the above statement could be interpreted as a form of gender discrimination. Mr. K, although professing that he did not practise gender discrimination, admitted that he was slightly traditional and felt that his "duty is not done" if he did not beget a son. Mrs. K and Mr. L, in discussing gender discrimination in occupations, said that certain occupations were not suitable for women when they had to stay late in the night entertaining clients in public places, or when they had to spend a majority of the days in a month out of town. Chee, too, believed that certain jobs that need great physical strength were not suitable for women, and that he was aware of the expectations of some Chinese were for women to be housewives. The expressed contradictions can be traced to the cultural beliefs of the respondents that tend to favor the male gender. However, from the analysis of their responses, it can be seen that the respondents have discarded many of the long-entrenched discrimination against the female gender. Hence, the tradition of gender bias is on its way out, but there is still some lingering nostalgia for

gender preference. It appears as though it will only be eradicated through an evolutionary process as characterized by Mrs. T's philosophy of letting time do its job.

RESEARCH QUESTION # 4

What is the Impact of the model minority label on recent Chinese Immigrant students in relation to their academic progress, gender and socioeconomic status? How do Chinese students respond to this label? What are their coping strategies?

The "model minority" label imposed on Asian immigrants included Chinese immigrants. The stereotype was popularized by the mass media without the Chinese laying claim to it; it was not in the nature of the Chinese character to boast of their achievements. They were unwilling and uninvolved participants dragged into a national debate on affirmative actions which had adverse consequences for them.

Impact and Response to the Model Minority Label

Six of the eight respondents replied that they had heard of the term model minority except Mr. and Mrs. L. The knowledge they had were superficial because they had not read highly analytical articles or research studies on this

issue, except Chee who had some deeper knowledge through a course he had studied at college. They were not aware of the deeper implications of the label, nor the possible motives of the propagandists. All their definitions included the brilliant academic achievement and economic standing of the Chinese community. Mr. L commented that the Chinese ". . . seem to be the best in educational achievement, financially and not too much culturally." He noted that although the Chinese population was small, their achievements managed to catch the attention of Americans. Elwin stressed that few Chinese were on welfare, most worked hard and had a low crime rate. Chee referred to the articles he had read from Time magazine listing the Chinese students as doing well in education, being hard working, not causing trouble in school, doing well economically and being smart.

All of the six respondents react differently to this label. To Mr. K the label is not useful and does not give Chinese any advantage, unless it could be translated into political unity enabling Chinese to make decisions affecting their lives. Wern, too, felt that the label does not mean much to him, being a mere generalization of Chinese ability. To him, he felt that his strong academic performance was due to his individual efforts rather than as attributable to his belonging to the Chinese race. He did not feel he was treated any differently by the teachers or his peers on account of the label. This perception was also shared by Elwin and Chee. Wern felt that the stereotype could mislead others like his counsellor, who thought that he excelled in mathematics and kept on recommending him to apply to those universities that had excellent engineering programs.

Mr. K felt that this label had some truth, and did not think that it was used to shame other minorities who did not make it in American society. Mrs. K agreed with her husband that the label was not necessarily true of all Chinese as there were many failures among the Chinese community, for they had their share of drug addicts, alcoholics, gamblers and other undesirables in American society. Mrs. K expressed her fear that if Chinese were too successful academically, there might be a quota placed on their college admissions. She also felt that the label might have an adverse effect on Chinese students who did not excel. She noticed that her son was proud of the label, as he was performing well academically in school.

Mrs. T took the label as a complement, and recognition by mainstream Americans that the Chinese were capable and trustworthy. She felt that it could be used as a goal for her children to achieve and if they could not achieve academic excellence, then it would be an indication to them that they had to work harder for it. Elwin's answer coincided with that of Mrs. T. He took the label as a status for him to live up to. He was happy with the label as it made him feel good. He took this as an expression of an appreciation of the ability of the Chinese by American society. Chee also felt that the Chinese community was recognized by such labelling.

Chee felt that the labelling could be positive or negative, depending on who was doing the stereotyping. He felt that the protagonists of such labelling for the Chinese could be the antagonists of the Chinese in future, as the history of Chinese and Japanese immigration to America has proven. They had been extolled as model citizens as well as condemned as unassimilable aliens. Chee felt that the American government was behind the stereotyping with a

hidden agenda. Personally, he did not agree with such stereotyping as it did not fit every Chinese. He felt that he fit both the positive and negative stereotype of a Chinese because the people who did the stereotyping and viewed him positively now may view him negatively in the future. He noticed that many of his friends, who fit into this label, were happy with it.

Mr. K felt that for those Chinese students who were having academic difficulties in school the label would be difficult, especially those struggling to improve their English.

Reasons for the Success/Failure of the Chinese

The most important reason for the success of the Chinese as chosen unanimously by all the six respondents was in the domain of personal quality. They all emphasized that hard work was the number one reason for success, followed by determination, self respect and self-reliance, persistence, motivation, a positive attitude, discipline and behaving in acceptable ways in school. All of the three student respondents cited studying strategies and habits and organizing study groups as important elements to success. Other than school success, economic success was also seen as a result of the responsible, trustworthy, and thrifty nature of the Chinese. The answer that hard work or effort determined success seemed to reconfirm the few studies as enumerated in the literature review that Chinese believes strongly that effort plays a stronger role in success than ability.

The second reason was attributed to home contribution. Four of the six respondents mention that a stable home environment and the involvement of

parents in monitoring, checking, reminding and helping in homework were important contributions. The value of discipline was considered as important to success. Some pressures from the parents encouraging students to excel in schools were mentioned as important contributions. Furthermore, it was also mentioned by Mrs. T that student achievement in school was also taken as a family achievement. Thus, it could be seen that among the Chinese there was almost a synonymous identification of student and family success.

The third reason given by two of the respondents was to please the parents after all the hardship and sacrifice they had suffered. This was in conformity with the Chinese value of filial piety and the best way to repay parents was seen as performing well in school.

Mr. K felt that the wide opportunity in education opened to new immigrants in America acted as a strong motivator for students to do well in school, especially for those who had come from an "oppressive" country. The researcher is inclined to agree with Mr. K's observation.

Innate intelligence was thought of as a contributing factor by Elwin and Mr. K. Chee was ambivalent whether intelligence could play a part.

Mrs. T and Chee believed that laziness was the most important factor that accounted for the failures of some Chinese. All the six respondents stated that hard work was a key to success and failure was the result of laziness.

Mrs. T, Wern and Chee felt that students succumbing to bad peer pressure was another reason. Bad peer pressure would include hanging around doing nothing productive, smoking, doing drugs and indiscipline. Mrs. T noted that some Chinese students were sent here alone to America with their parents remaining back in their country of origin. These students would find

parental support missing. Unless they were well disciplined, they could easily be misled by bad company.

The freedom that Chinese students enjoy in America appeared to be boundless as compared to the freedom as practised in their country of origin. Some Chinese students and parents might succumb to a permissive society and permit their children to do what they like. Mrs. T and Wern felt that there might be some Chinese who would assume everything American was good and positive, and might accept wholesale the good and the "bad" values leading to failure, especially when the "bad" overwhelms the good aspect of life. Wern described this as accepting American values at face value. The ability to distinguish good and bad American values was an important measure of success.

Mr. K felt that the inability of new immigrants to adjust and adapt to the new American culture and environment might put them at a disadvantage. They had to adapt as rapidly as possible so that they would know how the American system and people function. For example, in schools, students must ask questions in class; otherwise, the teachers would assume that they had no problem. Mr. K felt that mastering English was a very important tool in determining success and failure.

Chee thought that some students' failure in school was due to their lack of interest in the courses they study.

In the world outside school, Mr. K felt that the weak political power of the Chinese might contribute to their failure. This weak political power leads to weak bargaining power in the American system.

Coping Strategies to the Model Minority Label

The model minority label does not pose problems for the student respondents. Elwin took it as a complement and a status for him to live up to. This could act as a motivator for him to excel in school. Wern did not believe the label is attributed to race but to individual effort. He took the label lightly. Chee had more insight into this label and felt the labelling was done by people with hidden objectives. He ignored it.

Summary

The "model minority" label had been widely quoted and indiscriminately applied to all Chinese without a comprehensive, dispassionate and balanced consideration of the true situation. It has been disclaimed by Chinese, that there exists a bimodal Chinese population, yet still persists to be in circulation. The harm such stereotype can inflict has already been felt in the exclusion of Chinese from certain educational programs such as affirmative action on admission to colleges and universities and scholarship and grants to colleges. The full ramifications of such stereotype and its deleterious effects have not been felt yet.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION # 1

Given the traditional and centuries-long attitude of great reverence for scholarship and learning in Chinese society and culture, what impact does the existing American system of education have on the Chinese immigrants? How do Malaysians brought up in both Malaysia and the United States interact with each other, especially in relation to the educational process? To what extent do they complement and reinforce each others' strengths? Are there changes in the traditional Chinese values of scholarship and learning?

First, the school systems in Malaysia and the United States differ markedly in the areas of the hierarchy of grades, curriculum, teaching methodology, system of funding, support services, amount of teaching aids, grading systems, disciplinary procedures and teacher-student relationship. Despite these differences, the academic performance of student respondents was not adversely affected. On the contrary, they seemed to have adjusted well to the new American system and are performing very well in schools. Two of the student respondents are presently studying at U. C. Berkeley and Santa Barbara.

Second, the main problem these student respondents faced in the American school system was in social interaction with their peers. They managed to overcome their difficulties through various coping strategies such as ignoring the teasing and bullying, making more friends even with their tormentors, reporting to school authorities, using physical force and discussing with their parents. The parents also suggested they follow their instincts and personalities, believing in themselves rather than succumbing to peer comments and pressures.

Third, the student respondents adjusted to their school culture by maintaining a silent period, observing the activities and interactions around them. Some of the more difficult problems involving values and beliefs, such as disagreeing openly with their teachers, participating more actively in class discussion, forming religious beliefs, and becoming more assertive, were left to the passage of time to solve them. However, in the meantime, they did not allow social or cultural differences to interfere with their academic progress.

Fourth, the respondents' traditional respect for scholarship and learning appeared to be unimpaired by the differences in society and culture. The adult respondents are encouraging their children to achieve, at minimum, a Bachelor's degree. The presence of many Ivy League colleges and universities strengthen further their resolve to perform well academically. It should be noted, however, that they are first generation immigrants and the impact of American culture on their basic beliefs in scholarship and learning may not be as great might be for third generation immigrants (Bullivant, 1988). It could be seen from the review of the literature that Asian students, whether at the school

or college level strive hard to excel in academics, even at the expense of their social relationship with other students.

Fifth, all of the adult respondents appeared to have been impacted and affirmed by the general American perception of the success criteria in school and are not pressuring their children to score distinction in every subject they take in school. Emphasis is placed on doing their best instead of scoring distinction at all costs. But this does not mean that they have lowered their expectations for academic success. There seems to be a change in the means to an end but, not the end itself.

Despite what Seville-Troike (1979) observation that American teachers are from the middle class which may affect the interactions between teachers and students and Garcia's (1978) allegation that American teachers are not prepared to handle different cultural groups of students in schools, the student respondents do not appear to be affected by these differences. They are also not affected adversely by Wong (1989) and Tsai's (1986) observations that certain stereotypic view of Chinese students and incompatible practices that might reduce student self-esteem in schools.

RESEARCH QUESTION # 2

Considering the differences between the eastern and western cultures, what coping strategies do the recent Chinese Immigrants use to negotiate a tolerable, if not, enriching experience for themselves in the home, school and society?

First, the cultural divide between Chinese and America is wide. Yet, the differences were not allowed to become a destructive wedge through various coping strategies taken by the respondents in the areas of interpersonal relationships, the school system, and the general way of life.

Second, the American culture impacts the cultural outlook of the respondents in various ways. Some of them had become more straightforward in their speech, more independent, more confident in facing future challenges, and more understanding and accepting of the general American way of life. The parents are less authoritarian in their relationships with their children, more accepting of their adolescents' opinions, choices of courses and career paths. Some of the parents' beliefs on certain issues have been strengthened such as allowing their children to perform their best academically rather than pressuring them. However, some of the respondents need to work on their beliefs of gender equality through practice rather than theory.

Third, one of the most noteworthy outcomes of the exposure of the respondents to their new culture was that there was no cultural conflicts between the adults and the adolescents. The adolescents did not rebel nor engage in typical American adolescent delinquencies. Instead, they were compliant and did not appear to have been influenced by negative American adolescent values such as smoking, doing drugs, staying out late, engaging in teen sex and generally defying parents. They appeared to be practising many of the Confucian precepts of respect for elders, filial piety while they also understood their role in family life.

Fourth, the racial discrimination practised in America appears mild compared to that practised in Malaysia. If any of the discriminatory practices

have affected the respondents, they did not appear to have impeded them in their process of adjustment, progress and stay in America. Some of the respondents coped with discrimination by working extra hard to compensate for the disadvantage of being different ethnically, culturally, and racially. Some of the respondents coped by believing in their ability, following their instincts in doing what is right, consoling themselves that there are better opportunities for the future and ignoring the discriminations.

Fifth, all respondents employed various coping strategies to overcome the problems arising as a result of conflicting cultural values, such as in interpersonal relationships involving topic of conversation, depth of queries, social rules and convention, discipline and respect. Their coping strategies appeared to be effective in ameliorating or solving their difficulties resulting in their stay in America an enriching and positive one.

Sixth, all of the respondents felt that they did not have to abandon their culture to succeed in America owing to several positive conditions like democracy, magnanimity of the people and general acceptance of cultural differences. The adult respondents hoped and believed that their children would become bicultural in the future.

Seventh, all of the respondents rejected the allegations that racial discrimination in the job market and the social, cultural, and linguistic mismatches in the classroom between the teachers and students are causes of minority students' failure in class. They believed that an individual's effort was the key to success.

All respondents felt that their migration to America had brought them more advantages than disadvantages and are optimistic of their future except one adult respondent who is ambivalent.

All the respondents do not appear to have suffered problems related to severe culture shock or stress from acculturation that Thoen (1982) and Lee (1979) had found among other immigrants. There are some indications of the differences in school culture and the home culture the student respondents have to face as related by Hosokawa (1969). They certainly are subjected to some of the dilemma of cultural ambivalence as stated by Koyama and Lee but it does not appear to be so serious as to affect them adversely in their academic achievement and adjustment to a new environment. All the respondents can be considered to undergo the various stages or types of assimilation as related by Creely (1969) and Postigliones (1983).

RESEARCH QUESTION # 3

Given the traditional preference for the male over the female gender by the Chinese as manifested in the many forms of gender discrimination, what adjustments concerning gender do new immigrants make?

First, there have been great improvements in the way the Chinese females are discriminated against when compared to their status in traditional China and Malaysia, and overtime prior to the fifties to the present in Malaysia, according to all respondents.

Second, the respondents cited many instances of gender discrimination in Malaysia in occupations such as women holding traditional jobs, lower ranking jobs and prohibition from certain jobs; in education, where more males have greater opportunity to study overseas than the females; and their general rights in terms of marriage and divorce rights where they are at a disadvantage, and societal attitude towards divorcees.

Third, four of the six adult respondents want to ensure that the discrimination they suffered would not be passed on to their children in terms of higher education for the girls, inheritance, limiting choices to only traditional occupations, and sharing household chores.

Fourth, although some of the adult respondents professed to be impartial in gender matters, they too still harbor some lingering prejudices in practice. Mrs. L felt that if women wanted to completely play the role of the husband, it might spell ruin to the family. Mr. K admitted that he was somewhat traditional and if he did not beget a son, he felt that his "duty is not done" and Mr. L felt that there may be certain occupations that are not suitable for women, especially those that require the woman to be away from home most of the time. One of the three student respondents felt that occupations that require great physical strength may not be suitable for women while another felt that if women are physically capable, they should be treated equally.

Fifth, all respondents found that women in America enjoy more rights than their counterparts in Malaysia due to several reasons such as strong advocacy groups for women's rights, legislative protection of women's rights, and the willingness of American women to stand up for their rights.

RESEARCH QUESTION # 4

What is the impact of the "model minority" label on recent Chinese Immigrant students in relation to their academic progress, gender and socioeconomic status? How do Chinese students respond to this label? What are their coping strategies?

First, the model minority label appears to have a different impact on different respondents. Two of the three student respondents felt the label is not meaningful to them, while the third considers it a complement. The three adult respondents viewed it as a recognition of the ability of the Chinese.

Second, two of the three student respondents do not think highly of the label. One felt that his academic achievement is a result of his effort rather than his race, while another felt it meaningless as the people who did the labelling were manipulating the issue for their own purpose. A third thought it a status goal for him to achieve. One student respondent experienced that this stereotype could mislead others like his counsellor thought that he was good in mathematics and kept on recommending him to colleges that are renown in engineering. Some adult respondents acknowledge that not all Chinese students are excelling in schools.

Third, all of the six respondents who discussed the model minority issue cited diligence as the main reason for the success of the Chinese students in school besides other contributing factors like parental involvement, discipline, self-motivation, and realization of the purpose of their family's immigration to America. In terms of economic and social achievements, some of the adult

respondents quoted reasons of diligence, trustworthiness, commitment, risk-taking, and perseverance.

The reasons for the success of the student respondents in their academics appear to conform to the cultural reasons given by various researchers as family upbringing, family unity, family involvement, and diligence (Barrozo, 1987; Hacker, 1994; Kan, 1984; Sui, 1993; Vernon, 1982; Wright, 1983). Some of the researchers quote the reaction to the rejection by mainstream cultural groups as another reason (Guthrie, 1985; Odo, 1973; Takaki, 1989). Kan (1984) and Candill (1962) mentioned the guilt feeling for the parents' sacrifice and the feeling of filial piety as added reasons for their motivation to do well academically in schools.

Other Findings

All the respondents were asked what they foresee their future would be like in America in terms of certain issues in life such as their academic education, occupation, hope for their children, community involvement, retirement, culture, and reflections on their migration to America.

All of the adult respondents were unanimous in their decision that there would be no further **academic education** for them due to reasons of age, purpose, economic hardship, and sacrifice.

Four of the five adult respondents wanted to continue in their present **occupations**, managing their own businesses with the long-term goal of expanding them. While Mrs. T currently has no business of her own, she plans

to manage her own family day-care in the future. She plans to continue on her present job, working as a teacher in a private day-care.

Though all of the adult respondents had no academic plans for themselves, they prefer to concentrate on the **future of their children**. All of them planned to have their children finish at least a college education and seek a career of their own choosing. Elwin planned to be an aeronautical engineer, Wern, a lawyer and Chee, a businessman. Mr. L and Chee thought of finishing a post-graduate degree in Master of Business Administration.

At present, **community involvement** has low priority in their life due to several reasons, like constraints of time, money and commitment. Mr. and Mrs. K felt when they were financially well-off, they would like to volunteer serving the elderly. Mr. and Mrs. L would like to serve the people in underdeveloped village in China from where his father migrated. Mr. L would like to establish an agency where he could help all new Chinese immigrants from all settle down and find them employment. Mrs. T has no plans for any community involvement at present. Chee said he would like to serve humankind all over the world.

For their **retirement**, different respondents had different plans. Mrs. T declared that she did not want to think about it now while Mr. L and Mrs. K planned to travel all over the United States and, if possible, all over the world.

Owing to American culture undergoing a state of flux, all of the adult respondents want their children to be **bicultural** -- a healthy blending of the Chinese and American culture. They believed strongly that for their children to be able to function in America, this was the only natural choice. They did not want them to be culturally resistant, nor did they want them to lose their Chinese identity. The researcher would think of another possibility the transmutation of

American culture where the mainstream culture would become bicultural or multicultural.

Three of the five adult respondent explicitly answered that they were confident that their children would have a **bright future** ahead of them. Elwin and Wern, too, speculated that the future would be bright in terms of their studies and career. Mrs. L hoped that the future American government would not discriminate against minorities. She also hoped for peace in the world.

Reflections

Upon reflecting on their immigration from Malaysia, Mr. K, Mrs. T and Mr. L currently felt that they had made the correct decision considering all the gains and losses they had experienced. They were cognizant of the fact that it was too late for them to pursue academic and professional qualifications, but were inspired that their children would be able to benefit from what America had to offer. However, Mrs. K was ambivalent about their migration to America because of alternating feelings of optimism and pessimism. Her children's excellent academic performance in schools was a source of happiness to her. But she felt she would regret it if they did not do well. Mrs. T, too, acknowledged that the best yardstick to judge the correctness of the decision on migration would be the future standing of all her children in America.

Overall Conclusion

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, it can be said that the different system of education in America does not impose adverse effects on the student respondents. The various issues discussed such as the impact of American society on their educational values, different school administrative style, teaching methodologies, and problems encountered in schools do not significantly affect their values. Second, the cultural differences do not affect negatively on all the respondents' attempt in adjustment to the new culture/society such as interpersonal relationship, racial discrimination, work ethics, and way of life. Third, the attitudes of American people toward gender discrimination strengthened and enlightened further the respondents' attitudes in positive ways. Last, the model minority label did not bestow any benefits or disadvantages to the respondents in significant ways as perceived by them. They are not aware of the deeper implications of such label.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, conclusions and review of the literature of this study, several recommendations are made which may have educational implications for the students, teachers, school principals and education authorities. Recommendations were also made for further research studies which may shed further light on the conditions of Chinese immigrants from Malaysia and other parts of the world.

Educational Implications

First, based on the different concepts of what constitutes good discipline, the students respondents found the discipline in American schools lax and were unaccustomed to the manner American students treat their teachers. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers, principals and educational authorities tighten school discipline so as to create an even more conducive environment for learning.

Second, based on the findings of the study and the review of the literature that most of the problems the immigrant students encountered in school are social in nature, it is recommended that school authorities be made more aware of the different social and cultural needs of the immigrant students as well as inculcating diversity awareness of American students.

Third, most of the respondents appeared to like the varying level of difficulties of the courses which permit students to progress at their own pace. It is recommended that all schools offer Advance Placement courses in more subject areas besides the regular courses to cater to the varying needs of the students, whenever possible.

Fourth, from the responses and attitudes of the participants, as well as the review of the literature on the bimodality and failures of Chinese immigrant students in schools and colleges regarding the model minority stereotype, it is recommended that teachers, principals and school authorities be well-informed of the issues when making decisions concerning Chinese students. They should be careful to based decisions on individual rather than racial needs.

Further Research

First, considering the sampled respondents were from middle income group of Chinese Malaysians, it is recommended that future study target the lower income group to investigate whether the American system of education, American culture and society, treatment of gender issues and the model minority label had different impact on their traditional values.

Second, this study was confined to only Malaysian Chinese. It is recommended that the potential impact of the American values on the education, culture, gender preference, and attitude towards the model minority label of other Chinese from other parts of the world be investigated.

Third, all the sample respondents are first-generation Chinese immigrants to the United States of America and their basic values and beliefs

on education, culture, gender issues and reactions to the model minority label are molded firmly according to Eastern traditions. How would the second, third and subsequent generation Chinese feel towards the above issues? A comparative study involving participants from these different generations is recommended.

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APPENDIX

Data from Interviews

Data collected were presented according to cases. The first case consists of the student (Elwin), the mother (Mrs. K) and the father (Mr. K); the second case consists of the student (Wern) and the mother (Mrs. T); the third case consists of the student (Chee), the mother (Mrs. L) and the father (Mr. L). The data presented comprised of the following headings for the adult respondents: general background, educational background, working background, socio-economic status, attitude towards education, gender issues, adjustments to American society/culture, model minority, the future and summary. The data from the student respondents were presented according to general background, educational background, gender issues, attitudes towards education, adjustments to American society/culture, model minority, the future and conclusion. [Note: Comments within brackets are those of the researcher].

Interview with Student, Elwin (Case 1)

Background

The respondent, Elwin, is a boy 16 years old. He is the eldest of the four siblings comprising three boys and a girl. He lives with all his siblings and both parents in a single family house owned by the family. He will be entering as a junior in a local high school this September, 1995. His brother, Jeffrey, 14

years old will be in the middle school, while the third, Richard, nine years old and the youngest, Teresa are in elementary schools.

Elwin and all his siblings were born in Malaysia. He was born on May 12, 1979 in one of the port cities of Malaysia, which is situated about 25 miles from the capital city, Kuala Lumpur. At the time of their migration to the United States of America, he was 11 years old. Hence, he is comparatively, a recent immigrant of about five years.

He was not a participant to the decision-making process to migrate but dutifully accepted the decision that was made by his parents to embark on a journey to a new homeland. Elwin indicated that he was eager to migrate to America. He related that his parents' reasons, among others, for migration was to provide him the opportunity of the best education that could be had in the world. An English education was perceived to provide him the best access to knowledge in this modern age. [The medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education in Malaysia is Malay which is not a "modernized" language. It is deficient in technological, scientific, legal, and medical terminologies. Besides this, the historical, educational and political developments had always been tumultuous with the Chinese and other non-Malays preferring English as a medium of instruction in schools rather than Malay].

Educational Background

Elwin was enrolled in one of the prestigious Chinese Elementary School in the port city. [Prestigious or premier school implies school that is well-administered by capable and committed personnel. This is usually reflected in

excellent public examination results, strong financial standing and restricted admission into these schools. Teachers are dedicated and usually provide challenging school and home assignments. They have high expectations of students. A greater variety of extra-curricular activities are also available in these schools. These schools are very popular with parents and they take extra pains to ensure that their children are enrolled in these schools. Academic competition among students is keen. Invariably, the students performed brilliantly at standardized diagnostic assessment in grade three and at achievement examination in grade six].

Elwin had the opportunity to study in this competitive environment for five years before he migrated with his family to America. Competitiveness has become part of his habit of life and consequently, he finds the demands of the American schools to be very mild.

Elwin was instructed in Mandarin. [In Malaysia, Mandarin and Tamil languages, besides Malay, are permitted as mediums of instruction in public schools at the elementary level only. All public schools at the secondary level use only Malay as the medium of instruction. English and Mandarin are allowed in only private secondary schools as mediums of instructions.]

Elwin had the benefit of English taught to him for three years, starting in grade three as one of the subjects in schools. However, it is taught for a total of only one and a half hours each week. Hence, his exposure to English at school was minimal. Elwin is of the opinion that the biggest problem in studying English in Malaysia was the limited time allocated and he found he could hardly carry on a conversation in English with any degree of fluency. [English in Malaysian Chinese elementary school is taught through rote memory and is

confined to knowing certain common content words for filling in blanks. The teaching of English does not emphasize functional, communicational or practical skills. There is little stress on sentence writing, creative writing, reading or conversation. As English is officially considered by the government as the second language, it is in practice, a third language for Chinese students]. Elwin revealed that he learned only simple English in school. When he was in grade five, he had only one "tiny" text-book. He was about to learn grammar when he had to migrate to the United States of America.

Elwin had only limited English proficiency when he arrived in America and as there was no Chinese bilingual education in his neighborhood schools, he was enrolled in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) class. However, Elwin has the advantage of home tutoring by his parents as they are both educated in English-medium schools. He related that he "knew a few words of English here and there just sufficient to understand" and be able to converse haltingly in incomplete sentences punctuated with grammatical errors when conversing with teachers and peers initially. When he compared the standard of English he had acquired in Malaysia, he was of the opinion that it was "really bad." He said that his greatest problem was not being able to use proper grammar. In addition, he was so self-conscious of his inadequacy that he did not even answer the teacher's questions on the very first day of school in the United States, though he understood perfectly what he was being asked. However, he was more confident on the second day to be able to provide some answers to teachers' questions.

Basing on his experiences studying English, he said that he encountered the most difficulty in learning rules of grammar and vocabulary. As a result of

this, his initial problems were in speaking, reading and writing respectively. Subsequently, he found speaking easiest, followed by writing and reading. He was very grateful and lucky to have understanding and helpful teachers at the fifth and sixth grade levels where they would pull him aside to provide him one-on-one instruction. He found this extra help a vital contribution to his rapid English development, as after about two months, he was able to function on par with other classmates. Being in "submersion" program, he had to do the same kind of work as the other classmates. He was fortunate that his peers were also helpful and understanding in his adjustment to American education by teaching him oral and grammar.

At present, Elwin is bilingual in Mandarin and English and is very comfortable with the usage in his daily academic work. However, he found that his Mandarin has deteriorated through the infrequency of usage due to the limited circle of Mandarin-speaking persons that he is able to come into daily contact. He has also learned some Spanish in his two years of instructions at the eight and ninth grades. He is able to speak and write very simple Spanish but not proficient at reading yet.

Attitudes towards education

Elwin's attitude towards education has been influenced greatly by his parents, school environment and the general Malaysian philosophy.

Malaysian and American Education Compared

Elwin stated that the most prominent difference that struck him when he first entered American school was the use of English as the medium of instructions in all subjects. The duration of using English as a medium of instruction from one and a hour per week to one hundred percent was a great change to him. Despite the availability of bilingual education in America, he did not have the opportunity to continue his Mandarin education due to the paucity of Mandarin bilingual programs.

One important difference Elwin finds between the education system in Malaysian and America is, the Malaysian curriculum does not provide for college-level classes like the advance placement classes. He finds the standard of advanced placement class exacting and has to spend a great proportion of his time studying. He managed to obtain the maximum score of five for his Biology advance placement examination. Ethics and civics are taught in Malaysian schools but not in the United States.

Elwin notes there is a greater variety of extra-curricular activities that are of great fun in American schools like dances, carnivals, food festivals, field trips and the availability of guests to lecture in class and perform in the auditorium. Also, there is more time allocated for play in American schools as compared to the time allocated in Malaysia. There were limited field trips in Malaysia. The "fun thing" he can remember was the annual distribution of free fried chicken by courtesy of Kentucky Fried Chicken on Children's Day.

One notable difference in school atmosphere where Elwin misses the most is good discipline. He thinks discipline is stricter in Malaysia than in

America. The teachers in Malaysia are empowered to enforce strict discipline in classrooms. Some of the teachers mete out caning (padding) as a consequence for misbehavior. [School regulations in Malaysia stipulate that only principal or vice-principal can mete out corporal punishment and this has to be done through specific procedures set out by the Ministry of Education to avoid litigations by parents. It must be noted that parents and the general Malaysian society very rarely take educational personnel to courts as they respect and concur with the disciplinary actions taken by the school personnel which are assumed to be for the overall good of the students]. In contrast, Elwin finds the teachers over here are "so soft and the students run over them." He says, "The students here are generally noisy and talk back to the teachers." He finds there are a lot of bad students. He attributes the better discipline in Malaysian schools to the strict school regulations and the inculcation of moral values. There are very few disciplinary problems and the students behave well.

He noticed that his teachers in Malaysia were less experienced in terms of the number of years of teaching service; in America, he estimated that his American teachers have at least 25 years of teaching experience. However, he qualifies his statement without implying the teachers in Malaysia are less capable. He says, "In fact, they are equally as good." He witnesses the teachers here made liberal use of more advanced technological teaching aids like television, overhead projector, film and videos besides abundant writing materials. On the other hand, the teachers in Malaysia assigned great amount of class and home work than the teachers in America despite the fact that the class enrollment in Malaysia is about 50 or more as compared to about 30 in America.

Elwin finds the American evaluation and assessment system different from Malaysia in that the students' academic results in America are not norm-referenced and there is no assigning of positions in class. His assessments are given in grades of A to F in America whereas in Malaysia, they are in percentages. He finds it easier to score grade A in American schools and be placed first in class. He thinks it is due to less competition. He relates that in Malaysia, students are sent to private after-school tutoring so as to acquire a competitive edge over other classmates. Malaysian parents generally have high expectations for their children. He says, "They expect the students to score an A or at least a B in every subject." He relates that the students in Malaysian schools are exhorted by the teachers to study hard and are subjected to a certain degree of pressure to excel in school work. He speculates that the high expectations of teachers, coupling with the drive for excellence by the students resulted in higher "standard" of education. He realizes that where academic results are concerned, the "American parents and students here are easy going. To them having a B is considered good and a C is not bad. Their main concern is that they do not get a failing grade." Hence, he concludes there is not much expectations on the part of the parents or the students to do well. On the part of his teachers' expectations of students in America, he finds the degree of expectations depends on individual ability as opposed to race-based expectation. He is of the opinion that a teacher's expectation depends on the individual ability, effort, commitment, interests, performance and other personal characteristics that may help form the teacher's expectation.

Generally, due to the less emphasis placed on competitiveness and amount of homework and conversely, a greater concern placed on 'fun'

activities, he finds the amount of learning is less in America than in Malaysia although he spends more time in school here, from 6:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. [In Malaysia, most schools start at about 7:30 and finish at about 1:30 p.m. to make room for the second session in the afternoon]. He finds that a lot of his time is taken up with after-school extra-curricular activities in America.

Elwin finds that he likes the school here better than in Malaysia. One of the main reasons given is that there is less pressure to perform as the parents and teachers here do not pay much attention to competitiveness and grades the children score in schools. He also finds that he is "doing well here in school with less effort as compared to the situation in Malaysia." He believes he can do equally well in Malaysia too but has to put in more effort due to the high expectations and competitiveness in school. Another reason for liking the school more in America is the relatively small class size of about 30 students, whereas in Malaysia it is about 50. As a result, American teachers can pay more attention and provide more assistance to the students. He also relates that other administrative staff, right from the principal, assistant principal, secretary, nurse, librarian, to the counselor are very helpful and pay more attention to the welfare of students. He considers American schools more fun and less monotonous with activities such as dances, parades, club activities, film and video shows, sports and games. The physical school environment is also important to him. He finds the school compound spacious with wide areas allocated for fields and various types of courts for games. There is concern for landscaping as an important consideration for the general environmental health of students. In Malaysia, he finds that the schools are very compact and there is less concern for the environment by government and general public. The

student population density is higher in Malaysia and the buildings are usually double or triple storeys. Another noticeable difference is American schools have far more funds to pay for expensive equipments such as computers, photostating machines, overhead projector, writing materials and other advance technology as aids for teaching and learning. He finds there is no compulsory requirement for students to wear uniforms in most American schools. He notices that the students can dress whatever they like as long as it is within the dress code of the school district. He thinks this gives an atmosphere of greater freedom.

Strengths and Weaknesses of both Education Systems

In comparing the strengths of the Malaysian schools, Elwin enumerated the following. First, there is the tracking of students according to academic ability so that those who can progress faster and are capable of learning more challenging work are not impeded from doing so. As he was a good student in Malaysia, he was happy with this tracking. He says, "Smarter students can go ahead." He does not believe that "the school should slow the kids down." [According to the Malaysian New Primary School Curriculum, official regulation dictates that there should be no tracking in schools. However, this ruling is seldom enforced. It depends very much on the initiative and philosophy of the principal together with the influence of members of the board of governor of that particular school. As common with Chinese elementary schools, the vast majority of principals and members of the board of governors, together with the general community hold strongly to the principle of competition and allow those

who can profit from a more rigorous curriculum move forward]. Elwin attended one of these elite schools with keen competition. Second, there is strict discipline in Malaysian schools. Correspondingly, there are no unnecessary distractions and interruptions from students talking back to teachers, talking in class, and from teacher having to spend time requesting class to be silent. Third, his classmates in Malaysia were all extremely motivated to learn and their aim of coming to school is just to do that in spite of the absence of compulsory education in Malaysia. Any student who is disruptive or have behavioral problems will be severely dealt with. Serious behavioral problems are rare. Furthermore, misbehaviors were taken care of immediately by the school principal. Fourth, there is definitely more competition in academics in Malaysia and he believes that this will raise the standard of education and keep the students on tasks. Fifth, there is the screening of students before they are admitted to elite schools. Some of the screening procedures may take the form of "placement" or "achievement tests" informally administered by the individual school concerned or just the report cards from the previous school will be sufficient. [There is an established process of categorization of schools by the local department of education on their premier status. When schools have been classified as premier, the department will set limit to the number of students in these schools and impose other admission criteria. Increased attention will be paid by the education authorities on these schools, particularly on the intake of students as a lot of parents clamor to have their children registered in these schools. There have been many cases of bribery and corruption where school department officials were given monetary benefits to "buy" places in these premier schools by the parents. The popularity of these schools resulted from

the high standard of teaching, discipline, efficient administration, committed and diligent teachers, better facilities, and invariably, exceptional success at the public, standardized examination. In addition, schools are allowed to accept private donations to their capital and annual recurring expenditures. With the great importance placed on education by the Chinese community and the belief that monetary contributions made to school is one of the noble and virtuous act of human philanthropy, these Chinese schools are well-funded].

Elwin considers there are some weaknesses in the Malaysian schools. He does not agree with caning as a form of corporal punishment. Second, schools are congested due to the high density of student population and there is limited open physical space for students to move about. Landscaping is not part of the aesthetic consciousness of Malaysian people. [Sometimes, this is unavoidable as land price in urban Malaysia is high and there are occasions where there is no adjacent land available for expansion. In addition, the alternative use of urban land for commercial purpose is highly demanded by entrepreneurs.] The third weakness is the large class size and consequently, students get less attention from the teachers. Fourth, there are less extra-curricular activities as the emphasis in Malaysian education is on "studying for tests." Fifth, Malaysian schools have less physical and curricular resources such as teaching and learning materials, aids, equipments, cafeteria, and library as compared to the American schools.

Elwin observes that the weaknesses in the Malaysian schools can be considered to be the strengths in American schools such as prohibition of caning or paddling in Californian schools. The school compound is huge with wide areas for strolling; esthetic landscaping with trees, flowers and the student

population is small. Third, the class size is small and students receive more attention and assistance in America than in Malaysia. As previously stated, there is more extra-curricular activities which are also fun. As compared with Malaysian schools, the physical and curricular resources are plentiful here.

Elwin considers the weaknesses in American schools include student indiscipline and lack of respect for school authorities and teachers. He says, "The teachers are not strict with students, although they are considered as good and capable teachers." He notices that students are not very motivated to learn generally, as some of them attend school because their parents forced them to as a result of the compulsory education laws. He finds his school consists of students from all ability groups and in each is composed of students with all levels of proficiencies and capabilities. He says, "One has to compete with oneself and with some of the challenging tests such as SAT, SAT II, achievement tests and advanced placement examinations."

Problems Encountered in American Schools and Coping Strategies

Although coming from a different country in terms of culture, language, school system and curriculum, he says basically he does not face serious problems in schools that require the special attention of school administrators nor the mediation effort of his parents to solve them. Socially, he was able to adjust and adapt very well. The problems, if any that he encounters, are too insignificant for him to either consult his school counselor nor to confide in his siblings or peers. He feels he can manage all the problems by himself.

The biggest problem he encountered when initially entering American school was his learning of English. He had problems with his reading, writing and speaking. He had to go to his teacher for help. Fortunately for him, he had excellent assistance from his peers. As soon as he improved his English proficiency, he did not have problems learning and in fact, he has transformed himself from a help-receiver to a help-provider in Mathematics. He had no problem interacting with his classmates, school mates or the general public. In fact, he finds all the other students are ethnically different from each other. He experienced valuable interactions with Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and other Asians on more positive occasions than negative ones. The "worst" social problem he has experienced was being asked, "Does your butt say, 'Made in China?'" by some students. He related that the best way for him to handle this situation was to ignore the question. Another problem which he encountered was on a matter of moral principle. He related that he went to a movie with some classmates. His classmates, after paying for one show proceeded to watch another without paying. He and another of his friend felt it was wrong and they left the theater together after the first show was over. He feels that his classmates who cheated are actually not vicious or mean people; they were just mischievous. They did not object or call him names when he told them he did not want to participate in what they did. In fact, they had informed him earlier, before going to the movie, of their intention and it was up to him to decide whether he wanted to join them. They respected his decision and left him alone without making an issue out of it.

The help he foresees he needs badly to succeed in school and college is financial and not academic as the latter is within his power of control. At

present, besides academic work in class, he yearns for more participation in school activities like the expansion of greater role in student government. He is a member of his school's student government. He likes to involve himself more in school-based management activities. He also likes to have greater access to relevant information that concerns him in his present school as well as college information in future. He emphasizes his self-discipline and self-reliance to succeed. He estimates that he is one of the "brightest students in his class." He is, in fact, giving back what he initially received from his classmates by "explaining and showing them how to solve problems especially in Mathematics." He has three options of future career in mind. In order of preference, he aspires to become an aeronautic engineer, a software engineer (animation) or an advertising artist. He hopes he can acquire further knowledge in these fields from professionals through working part-time or during summer with these people.

To Elwin, school is of paramount importance. He says, "The whole point of migrating is education and it is important that I must do well. If I do not do well, then there is no future." In order to obtain a good job he feels that he has to be academically and professionally qualified. His other motivation to excel educationally is to "repay" his parents for the sacrifice they had made for him. His ambition to be an aeronautic engineer has a long history. He says, "To become an aeronautic engineer has always been my dream, even when I was small." He finds that his parents are supporting him. The choice of this profession was his without any prodding or pressure from his parents. In fact, they have been liberal on his choice of future occupation; they left it completely to him to make the option.

Likes and Dislikes

Elwin expresses certain likes and dislikes of school. He is concerned with becoming a rounded personality. He does not consider himself an Asian American whose only concern is with academic study. He likes school as it is an "excellent place for me to make and meet with friends." This is also the reason why he likes extra-curricular activities and sports as he takes this opportunity to make friends not only with his teammates, but also their parents, siblings, opponents and their friends. He has his sense of the esthetics as he likes school as a wonderful place for him to stroll and roam around, to spend his leisure time and a time for reflections. He says, "This is only possible in American school as it has huge compound, in contrast to that in Malaysia." He likes lunch hour in America as he has sufficient time to eat his food and not rushed as in Malaysia where the recess was very short, 20 to 30 minutes. He usually brings his own food to school and occasionally he eats the food sold in the cafeteria. He loves his academic subjects, particularly Mathematics, computers and art in which he excels.

He indicates that he dislikes English subject, specifically grammar, spelling and vocabulary. This is not surprising as he was placed in a class full of students who were conversant in English when he first entered class in America at 11 years of age. Besides this, he has to spend extra effort and time on it. He is more inclined towards quantitative work than in languages. He has to overcome lag time to be on par with his American classmates in language ability. His second dislike is the fallout his school has to suffer from budget decisions made by politicians. He is "tired of the budget cuts the school need to

take and it affects the school program." As he is very concerned with getting a good and uninterrupted education, he dislikes the action taken by teachers to go on strike. He dislikes school occasionally when he feels that he has been overburdened with work, especially homework. Generally, he dislikes study, but at the same time he recognizes it is imperative because of its potential advantages and to fulfil his obligations towards his parents.

Gender Issues

Elwin finds that Chinese girls generally tend to perform better in schools than boys. He thinks this is attributed to the fact that girls like to study more than boys. Besides this, he observes that girls like to get involved in extra-curricular activities more than boys. He thinks "girls are more interested in schools and guys and other things like going to movies and playing games." He finds they tend to discuss more on these topics. [Elwin's observation that Chinese girls tend to perform better than boys was based on his observation and experience at the elementary level. There is a phenomenon among Chinese students that very few people have attempted to explain. It is a common occurrence that girls at the elementary school normally outshine boys in standardized examinations but around grade nine onwards, boys start to overtake girls straight through college]. In America, he has no opportunity to make any observations on this as he knows only two Chinese friends, one a girl and the other a boy.

In Malaysian schools, Elwin observes that girls are treated the same as boys. However, as adults, the "females are expected to be housewives." Where women are found working in government offices or the private sector, he

notices they do not hold high office. He guesses this is due to women not having as much right as men. Opportunity for job advancement or access to certain jobs are limited through social conventions. There is an underlying prejudice against women in Malaysia. He says, "Women are not regarded as highly as guys and they are not expected to do as well."

Elwin shares the same view that basically, women in America are treated the same as in Malaysia but there are certain differences. He asserts that the American women have more freedom to do what they like. They have more rights and are accorded greater respect than women in Malaysia. He feels: "American women can be anything they want to be like body-builders, mechanics, construction workers, athletes and others." He has seen "girls here are at times be better than guys." Generally, "the women here are better than the Malaysian women because they have more opportunity to be what they want to be and it has been shown to be so."

In his family, his parents do not expect his younger sister of eight to do "heavy stuff" but this does not apply to his youngest brother, who is only one year older than his sister. He notices that his parents "give her more toys, treat her more gently and give in to her more often."

Elwin thinks that women should be treated equally and fairly in education and occupation. As long as a woman is physically and intellectually capable, she should be given the same opportunity as men in education and employment. They should be given equal rights as the men.

Adjustments to American society/culture

Coming to America was the first trip out of the country for Elwin. He has not been exposed to different national cultures except those of the Malays and Indians in Malaysia. Hence, he has to face tremendous adjustment to life in America.

First Impression

When Elwin first landed in Los Angeles, he was overcome with a multiplicity of feelings. The first impression he had was the enormous size of the city when compared to Kuala Lumpur. It has only a population of about 1.2 million people. At the same time he felt a sense of nervousness and apprehension as he had never been to this new place. He was very happy too as he felt the full anticipation of "what it is like to be here after having listen to so much being said about the wonderful (American) schools." The positive impression was created by watching the films produced by Hollywood and the mass media. He quoted one particular television series called the "Night Rider" as specially intriguing as it had stimulated his curiosity about the places in America. He felt it must be "a very interesting place to live in." This cumulative impressions were developed from discussions in schools and with his parents as well as through television. He realized that what he saw and heard was a positive portrayal of America. In hindsight, he realized that the bright side only was presented to him while the ugly was suppressed. By now, he knew the ugly sides such as the involvement in wars by American government, political

corruptions, immoral activities such as murder, prostitution and crimes as well as the problem with health care system. He stresses that Malaysia is also not free from such problems in society. but they occur to a lesser extent. Overall, there was a feeling of great excitement and interest to know what was in store for him in America.

When he first entered American school, he felt frightful and apprehensive. He says,

I was scared because I thought I won't be able to communicate. The students and teachers and everybody that I came across are different. I was scared the teacher would scold me. I was afraid that the work may be real hard.

However, he soon found that his anticipation of being scolded by the teacher was unfounded and was very much relaxed later on. At first, he was not too excited to be in the class due primarily, to his concern for his deficiency in English but the moment he was comfortable with English, he was very excited being in American schools. This took him about two months to heave a great sigh of relief and found himself able to communicate freely with teachers and classmates.

He relates how he was first introduced to his classmates during lunch at the cafeteria immediately following his registration. One of the administrative staff took him to the cafeteria to meet his classmates. His impression on first entering the school was "scared and curious of others as they look and dress differently. They did not have uniforms on." The physical features attracted his greatest attention. All the students "did not have Chinese eyes." There were so many ethnically different students, the predominant ones being Hispanics,

Whites, Blacks, Vietnamese and Cambodians. After lunch, he was taken to the classroom to be introduced to the teacher.

Malaysian and American Culture/Society Compared

In Malaysia, he thinks that the whole society and schools are generally much stricter as compared to the situation in America. There is lacking a strong feeling of freedom. He also finds that cultural awareness and practices are not much emphasized in America as in Malaysia. The Whites, Blacks and Hispanics generally act and do more or less the same thing while in Malaysia, "the cultural line is more differentiated among the three main cultural groups" [that is, Malay, Chinese and Indian]. [Having studied in the Chinese elementary school, he is more culturally exposed and aware of the Chinese culture as its elements are transferred not so much through the text as in the daily behavioral patterns of the school staff, teachers and students (the hidden curriculum) and the various extra-curricular activities.]

He finds great differences in the way people interaction with each other. He says,

one most prominent thing was the people in Malaysia are more friendly and you could go to a stranger to say 'Hi'. Whenever one feels like visiting a friend, one just go over to the house without prior notification; but over here, one has to call first. It is more formal over here.

On the other hand, he finds the people in America more open in social conventions. One can touch each other or the opposite sex in public. They are

more intimate and are less "shameful" here. This could be attributed to the fact that "kids are not taught morals in schools and how to behave in society."

In matters of individual rights and freedom, he thinks that there are more rights here. An example, newspapers are not strictly regulated and controlled by the government, hence "one can say almost anything one wants to; but not in Malaysia."

In terms of work ethics, American people work "a lot harder here." He guesses it is due to the presence of greater competition. In Malaysia, the people there prefer to "layback."

Elwin believes there are more chances for him to achieve what he wants in America as "anything can happen." Besides this, there is "a lot of free enterprise, rights and freedom." He concludes by saying that "there is so much opportunity for one to succeed over here." [It is understandable for him to feel this way as in Malaysia, the constitution gives Malays special privileges, akin to affirmative action, with no time frame, where they are given preferences based solely on race to business licences, bank loans, government scholarships, appointments and promotions in government services, formation of all-Malays army, admission to colleges based on racial quota, special schools where only Malays can attend, government funded building of mosques for Muslims only, prime ministership and a plethora of privileges.]

Elwin found a new sense of democracy in American schools as the "students are encouraged to talk about politics and social issues." He is convinced that this is not possible in Malaysia. [Malaysian government has banned the discussion of certain political issues that concern the special privileges of the Malays, Bahasa Malaysia as the national language, religious

issues, and others that are considered sensitive. Infringement of these laws is punishable by imprisonment without trial for a period of two years and renewable every two years until the minister charged with the enforcement of these laws certifies otherwise.]

Elwin discovers that there are certain similarities between what is happening here and in Malaysia. Malaysians like to listen to American music and watch American movies. He thinks Malaysians "like to imitate American culture as shown in movies, television, and advertisements." In addition, he says there are also instances of racial discriminations in America as there are even more people from different races and ethnicities. To quote an example, he views the Rodney King beating and the subsequent riot as race motivated and feels very angry over the riot. He says, "Rodney King is a criminal and people should not have to stand up for him. People can have peaceful rally, I don't believe in this (riot)." He sees the outbreak of the riot as caused by some opportunists trying to commit crime and thefts. [Elwin experienced this L. A. riot but his parents had experienced a worse racial riot in Malaysia on May 13, 1969 where Malays were supported by the Malay Regiment army killing non-Malays in Kuala Lumpur.]

Problems Encountered and Coping Strategies

As a result of the difference in Chinese and mainstream American culture, he feels uneasy over certain aspects of the American culture such as over-permissiveness in matters related to sex and violence in movies, television programs and in real life. He says, "These programs are accepted over here

but not in Malaysia." He considers there is too little censoring of certain obnoxious movies. He says, "People have too much freedom; as a result they took advantage." According to him, the only way to tackle this problem is to avoid watching it.

Has Elwin ever succumbed to peer pressure? For a start, he has not encountered much problem because his friends are not considered bad students. However, he admitted having told white lies on one or two occasions when he wanted "to go places with his friends." He added, "I don't usually do that." He usually desists following what his friends are doing when he finds what they are doing is something wrong, for example, watching movies without paying. His most important strategy is to preempt any undesirable things happening by avoiding friends or others he thinks are potential problems. He observes their behavior carefully and avoids hanging around with them. He indicates that usually "the bad crowd has their own members and basically they will do their things and won't bother anybody. Generally they don't speak to me and I, to them."

Another of his important coping strategy used when others made fun of him is to ignore them. He relies on himself to solve such social problems. Socially, he "fits in with the crowd and basically with the society at large as well. The most important coping strategy to fit in with the crowd is to be myself and be nice to others." He added, "If I am nice to somebody and if they don't like me, they will leave me alone and they won't be mean to me."

His faced minor problem in school related to academics. He seeks the help of teachers. He is regarded as smart in his class and he makes use of his ability in Mathematics to help other classmates and in the process, gets to make

a lot of good friends. Getting involved in extra-curricular is another of his strategies to make friends and learn their cultures.

Racial Discrimination

On the question as to whether he has been discriminated on racial grounds, he recounted the case of the inappropriate question of whether his buttock has the words "Made in China." He considers it difficult to recall whether there was any ugly incident. He was not sure whether the following incident could be due to racial discrimination. When he was in a predominantly Black-populated elementary school, there was a tussle between him and another black girl for an award for the most promising student. He felt that he was more deserving of the award, which was supported by some of his friends. However, the award went to his competitor who was also very bright. He coped with this situation "by pretending that it never happens. Just forget it. There are greater opportunities to win award and this is not the only one. After all, the award is only \$50.00 in cash. I don't really care."

Generational Conflict

He experiences some differences in values, beliefs, hobbies, dress and other way of life between himself and his parents but he does not find them to be big issues causing irreparable conflicts. One notable difference is in the preference and enjoyment of music. He likes new rock and roll and Caribbean music whereas his parents like Chinese music. He does sometimes buy

Chinese CDs and he notices that his parents like it when he does so. He also prefers watching English programs more than his parents. He likes the MTV while they do not. Likewise, he likes sports while his parents do not.

In terms of spending habit, he tends to "spend a lot while his parents are more thrifty and tend to save more." He understands that it is not easy for them to spend money as they worked very hard for it. He detects that his father is also changing slightly and is more prone to spend money now, for instance, on buying computers and other academic learning materials.

On social behavior, his parents strongly believe that he should follow the Chinese trait of "greeting others and treating the elders with respect." He agrees with his parents on this score but notices that his younger brothers and sister are not following this strictly as they are exposed to the American culture at a younger age. He usually asks his parents beforehand if he may stay out late once in a while. He recalls an incident when he wanted to go out with his friends to the pool hall. His parents forbid him to go thinking that there would be drinking and fighting. He listened to them and regarded that as not a serious difference. He recalls that when he was young, at about eight years old, his father caned him when he did something wrong. However, this did not happen often.

His agrees with his parents that he should continue to learn his Mandari. However, sometimes due to pressure of school work, he finds it difficult to do so. They constantly remind him to practise speaking more in Mandarin daily for fear that he may lose it once he stops using it.

Between his two parents, he agrees with his mother on almost every issues as compared to his father. He feels that his father "gets angry all the

time. He has very short fuse and is bad tempered." In spite of this, there is no serious issue that they would really fight over.

His parents usually let him choose the type of clothes he likes to wear. They do not interfere with the types of clothes they wear but only with the prices.

On the topic of marriage, he says that his parents strongly suggest he marries only Chinese girl or at least, an Asian girl. The reason being that it would be easier for them to get along as they belong to the same culture and would be able to speak the same language, share the same food, and celebrate the same holidays and festivities. They also warned him that "American wife would not cook for him and they might get divorced easily and quickly." If his American wife does not like Chinese food, then there would be a problem.

Overall, he considers there is no generational conflict between him and his parents.

Impact of American Culture

After being immersed in the American culture for five years, it is inevitable that the slow process of acculturation is taking place. Elwin feels that he has undergone some changes since arriving in America. The first being his moral values. He reveals that he has become less religious. He did not follow the teachings of his religion, which is Buddhism. He was more of a practising Buddhist in Malaysia than in America. Since his arrival, he says he "does not seem to believe in any religion"; the furthest he has gone is to believe that there is a God. Second, his previous precept that money is everything has changed to a carefree attitude about it. He does not really care how much

money he has as long as it is sufficient to buy the things that he needs. Third, his ideas on certain Chinese cultural traditions are also undergoing changes, especially those that are related to superstitions. He quoted the example of throwing rice during the ceremony organized for the purpose of moving into a new house.

On the issue of acculturation in America, he believes that certain Chinese cultural practices should be retained while others rejected. Those he feels strongly should be retained are language, moral teachings such as code of ethics and filial piety, celebration of festivals, some matters related to Chinese history and basically, all other cultural practices not related to superstitions.

Those cultural traits to be rejected are related to religious belief, particularly Taoist belief in the dieties represented by animals such as the monkey God. He thinks the idols portraying animal Gods should be regarded as sculptors rather than God. Superstitions related to religion should be deemphasized and not be taken seriously such as people going into trances representing God or placing offerings of food in front of statues. As some of these practices are fundamental to the Chinese culture, it should not be totally rejected but deemphasized. The next cultural practice to be rejected is the sexist believe that women should assume the role of housewives because they "have the potential to do anything that a man can do."

Elwin appreciates the manner and positivity in American thinking that everything is possible as long as you work hard for it. He feels that the American values of equal rights, personal freedom, capitalism, and democracy as highly recommended for emulation while the extremes of freedom, abuse of democracy, negative morality and discrimination should be rejected.

Model Minority

Elwin has heard of the label "model minority" being used in reference to Asian Americans. He thinks the term refers to those "minorities that have accomplished success in society, for example, a lot of Chinese are very good in education, they do not tend to be violent, are hard-working, and few are on welfare."

He acknowledges that he has only two Chinese friends. He thinks they fit the "model minority" label as they have good grades in school and they are neither bad nor prone to violence. Furthermore, he notices that they have self-pride like any other Chinese. As he does not know them well, he surmises that they too respond to this as "having something to live up to." He feels that they consider this label a good and positive one.

Reasons Chinese Students Are Excelling in Schools

Elwin has two Chinese friends and about 15 Asian American classmates. He finds that all are doing well academically at school. When asked to give the reasons for it, he listed the following. First, he guesses that "they have a sense of how to study." Second, "the parents pushed them to study and to do well in school." Third, "some Asian friends do it for their parents." Fourth, "sometimes they are just naturally smart." He concludes that there is a combination of factors determining good academic performance.

Generally, he notices Chinese students tend to do better academically than non-Chinese students. Taking himself as an example for comparison with

other non-Chinese students, he says, "I need not have to put in much effort to get an A while the non-Chinese have to work hard to get it." He attributes the Chinese students' success to the "push from parents" towards excelling in academics rather than in "sports or towards being blue--collar workers." Another factor he ascribes to is the role model out in society by stating, "Chinese have the status of always being doctors, engineers and other professionals."

Impact of "Model Minority" Status

He feels the description fits him and that it makes him feel good. He also feels that the Chinese are appreciated. As a consequence of accepting this label, he has a status to live up to.

On the question of whether he is treated differently on account of his being a Chinese by teachers, classmates and others, he feels everyone is treated the same, not on account of race but as individuals. He feels that his teacher treats him on the basis of how well he did in school. His teachers' expectations are based on students' academic performance. He reports that smart students are from all ethnic groups in his class with the Chinese and other Asians doing particularly well academically. In absolute numbers, all ethnic groups are represented in the "smart" category but percentage-wise, the Asian students have a far higher proportion. He does not detect any special treatment being given to Chinese students by peers as most of his classmates are also minorities.

The Future

Elwin is optimistic that he will be able to perform well in school based on the fact that he has been doing well in the recent past. This is enhanced by his self-assessment of his ability in that he has very good memory and the capacity to learn very easily. His confidence on his ability is attributed to his teachers' contribution. Basing on his personal ability and external support, he says, "I have very good teachers and good surrounding in school." His confidence is further boosted by the fact that he does not have to seek extra help apart from his teachers. His self-esteem was enhanced when he was able to score a maximum 5 on his recent AP Biology examination at grade 10.

In conformity with many aspiring Chinese students, Elwin has envisioned for himself a college education after high school in aeronautic engineering. He hopes to be able to secure a job with NASA. He strongly believes that in these days of high competition in the United States and all over the world, one cannot do without a college education. He says, "Without a college education one can only become a clerk and cannot go anywhere." [He quotes the clerk as an example because in Malaysia, it is a low-paying job and it does not require a college degree.] To be on the competitive edge, he asserts that one "has to be on top in everything." He realizes he has to have a college education to fulfil his ambition of becoming an aeronautic engineer. In addition to working for NASA, he envisages starting a private company engaging in recreational flying.

In order to take him where he wanted, he is aware of what he has to do. First, he needs a scholarship or some form of financial aid to him see through college. Second, he realizes he has to invest effort and time on working hard in

his studies. Third, he requires support from his parents and friends towards achieving his ambition and dream in life.

Elwin believes that Chinese Americans have achieved great success in the fields of engineering, medicine, and business. He predicts that in future he could be one of them. He is aware of the minority struggle for civil rights and is optimistic that it will expand further as time goes on. He hopes he would be successful in getting a job with NASA in future but with a bit of reservations on account of reductions in budget for NASA and the threats of further cuts. He too wants to achieve the American Dream, by which he means "basically having money, success in career and a family to share with."

Summary

Elwin was raised under two different cultural systems--the Malaysian Chinese cultural system and the American system. Elwin is taking a serious attitude towards education and is aware that one of the most important reasons his parents immigrated to America is to seek greater educational opportunity for him. He is performing well in schools and does not encounter much problems. Whatever problems he faced, he uses certain coping strategies to minimize the adverse effects. He is attempting to fit into the best of both worlds without having to abandon completely his Chinese culture for the American culture. He is attempting to emulate the positive aspects of both cultures and reject the negative ones. He has shown the typical characteristics of the first generation immigrant--hard-work, perseverance, fortitude and the strong believe in the benefits of a solid education. He takes the model minority label as a

compliment and regards it as a goal for him to strive towards and to maintain. He has indicated that he does not share the traditional belief of some conservative Chinese towards gender bias against the females. He is confident of his future in America and plans to make the best of the opportunities this new homeland can offer him.

Interview with Mother, Mrs. K (Case 1)

Background

Mrs. K was born in 1957 in the capital city of Alor Star of a northern state of Peninsular Malaysia, just south of the border with Thailand. She was born the tenth child and the last girl in a family of twelve siblings, split evenly in gender with six boys and six girls. The difference in age between her eldest sister and her is 18 years. She lived in an extended family with her parents and grandparents. According to the more traditional Chinese philosophy on family matters, this big family is viewed as a very auspicious endowment.

Her father is a well-known personality in the local community. Throughout his life, he has been an ardent supporter of education, in general and Chinese education, in particular. He has held different positions of chairmanship or secretaryship of the board of governors of a local Chinese

elementary school. He is also a local philanthropist, donating tremendous amount of money towards providing an excellent education for the local people. The degree of his commitment to Chinese education can be measured by the amount of money he has donated to Chinese education, besides the time and effort spent on its promotion. The amount of money must have been tremendous as Mrs. K relates: "If the money were to be spent on the family, it could afford for the whole family a lavish and ostentatious living." His effort to promote the well-being of the local community has been recognized by the government and he has been awarded a medal of meritorious service to community by the king of his state. His generosity is not only confined to donations to schools but also the financing of his nephews and nieces to colleges. Her father was a business entrepreneur owning a sundry store. He has since retired from managing the business. Her father was a monk for a few months in his youth. However, it was not a long-term, serious profession. It was more of fulfilling the vows that his parents had made to one of the many dieties they believe in. [It is common practice for Chinese to make such vows by parents on behalf of children when they (the children) suffer recurring sickness or other problems such as falling under the spell of spiritual charm that, in the event of their recovery, they will spent a certain period of time as monks in temples to repay the blessings that they have received].

Mrs. K's mother is a full-time homemaker and helps her husband run the family business. Despite being the matriarch of such a big family, there is one unforgettable quality that Mrs. K finds amusing. She says, "My mom couldn't cook!" The job of cooking was assumed by her grandmother and later, by her elder sisters. Although her mother comes from a single-child family, she did not

attend school when young due to the traditional practice of gender discrimination.

Like a lot of pioneers who joined in the "diaspora" of the Chinese and who, by choice or fate landed on peninsular Malaysia, were both her paternal and maternal grandfathers. They migrated from the southern province of China. However, both her paternal and maternal grandmothers were from Thailand. Thus, her father and mother were the first-generation born in Malaysia.

Generally, all her brothers and sisters did not excel academically. Only she and her second brother were able to complete their Form Five education (equivalent to 11th grade) successfully obtaining the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (O-level) while her youngest brother, the last in the family completed Form Three (equivalent to 9th grade). All the rest of her siblings had either an elementary education or suffer attrition during the first six years of elementary schooling. Mrs. K was qualified to enter pre-university classes for two years as preparation for college education but owing to the education policies of the government, she was denied a place at this level in public schools in her home town. In order to continue her education in private pre-university classes, she has to live away from home, which her father did not consent. [The government racial policies on education dictate that places in pre-university classes shall be reserved by quota for Malays regardless of whether they are deserving or not. As the candidates from the non-Malays were selected on an extremely competitive basis, many highly qualified candidates were rejected. Furthermore, hostels were established to accommodate only Malay students from the various parts of the country free of charge. They were

also given stipends and scholarships as incentives to enrol in pre-university classes.]

For her family, academic success is no certain predictor of success in life because most of her siblings were successful business entrepreneurs and the most outstanding of all was her second brother, who is a millionaire in Singapore engaging in oil refinery-related business. All her sisters are successful enterprising individuals engaging in a variety of businesses, especially in the service industry such as tailoring, insurance, licence application and renewal for motor vehicles, food catering and at the same time, homemakers. On the other hand, one of her brothers, having dropped-out of school at 13 years is a successful businessman while another takes care of the family business. The remaining two were a motor workshop operator and a contractor for road- building. The youngest in the family pursues a totally different calling by becoming a monk.

Before immigrating to the United States, she was married to a childhood friend from her home town. Her husband worked as a government employee attached to one of the regional port authorities in Malaysia. Since her marriage, she has been a full-time housewife and she considers her family to be middle-class. On arriving in the United States, she feels there is a drop in her socio-economic status (SES) to lower-class. Although there is a lowering of her SES, she does not lament over the situation. She is instead proud that her family can live comfortably through their enterprising spirit, diligence and self-reliance. She takes great pride in their ability to sustain themselves without having to take the easy recourse to welfare which she considers as "shameful." To her, SES is not important as long as she is able to earn enough for the

whole family's economic needs. She says, "It doesn't matter whether my husband works as a handyman or a manager of a large corporation. What is important is that he is doing a job." She feels economic and social realities are more important than the mere lowering of SES classification across countries. She uses the comparison of material comforts between Malaysia and the United States for illustration. She says, "Although we were on a higher SES in Malaysia, material possessions such as electrical goods, household furniture, and other tangible assets were even less than over here as they are much cheaper in America." She quotes another example in terms of the monthly income figure. She believes that an income of \$2,000 to \$3,000 can hardly entitle one to a good living in Malaysia because of the higher cost of living. But in America, for the same amount of income they are "comfortably well-off" as long as one does not indulge in luxurious living like eating out at expensive restaurants or buying fanciful clothings. She comments: "What is important is the priority of needs." Since immigrating to America in 1990, she has returned to visit her family twice and found that in terms of real income, she is better off in America than in Malaysia.

Mrs. K was 33 years of age when she immigrated to the United States with her husband and four children. Her first three children were boys and the last, a girl. Their ages were 11 years, nine years, four years and the last three years at the time of immigration. Her most important reason for immigration is to follow her husband and family. She explains that she would not initiate the process of immigration by herself and neither would she persuade her husband to do so if he does not want to. She says she lets "the lottery system and her husband make the decision." [The lottery system, known as OP 1 was a

program instituted by the US government to select new immigrants from certain specified under-represented countries all over the world through the computers of 10,000 permanent resident visas at each selection.] Her second most important reason is education for her children because she considers there are very limited opportunities for her children to pursue college education due to the education policy of the Malaysian government. [The policy, among others, specifies that education in Malaysia can be delivered through Bahasa Malaysia only at the secondary level in all public schools; special schools are established with modern facilities for Malay students only; scholarships are monopolized by the Malays; places in the universities and colleges are apportioned strictly on a quota basis based on race; individuals do not have the freedom to decide the choice of majors in universities and colleges; vocational, technical and agricultural institutions are limited for Chinese and the range of courses are also limited.] Her third reason for immigration is, she has spent half of her lifetime in South East Asia and she wants to try a "new life" in America.

At present, her family is closely-knit with her husband working as a handyman and recently, as a businessman selling second-hand goods such as antique wares, furniture and clothings while she works as a full-time housewife. For the first three years, the family depended solely on her husband's income working as a handyman while she devoted all her time looking after her children as they were still small. She is assisting her husband in this second-hand goods business now as well as meeting the demands of homemaking. Her eldest boy will be in the 11th grade this September, 1995 while the second one, in 9th grade and the two younger ones, in elementary schools.

Educational Background

Throughout her academic career, Mrs. K was educated in English medium elementary and secondary schools. [In Malaysian elementary schools, English was used as a medium of instructions besides Malay, Mandarin and Tamil until 1970 when English was gradually phased out on an annual basis. Schools using English language as a medium of instructions were referred to as English-medium schools. Similarly, those schools using Mandarin or Chinese as the medium of instructions are known as the Chinese-medium schools.] She was one of two children to receive their education in the English-medium while the rest of her siblings were in Chinese-medium schools. She was sent to English-medium school for the purpose of having someone literate in English to handle correspondence, bills and accounts for the family business. Her highest educational attainment was the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (O-level). She married her husband immediately after her Form Five education. As she was a full-time homemaker at 18, she did not seek any avenues for professional training, neither was there a need to as her husband was earning sufficiently for their daily expenses until she immigrated to America.

During her second year of residency in America, she enrolled herself at the West Los Angeles Community College pursuing a course on airline ticketing. She relates that she did not complete the course due to the more urgent and pressing demands of family needs. She says that there is "too much to handle" and consequently discontinued her studies. At present, she has no specific plan for her future professional life and prefers to "leave it to the kids"

implying that she would sacrifice to ensure that her children are successful in their educational and professional careers. Her reasons for terminating the course were constraints of time, family responsibilities and paying her bills.

Besides English, Mrs. K is proficient in Mandarin, having been brought up in a Mandarin-speaking family and living in a Chinese ambience. She is more proficient in speaking and listening in Mandarin than in reading and writing. The state in which she resides is a predominantly Malay-populated area and being able to speak, read and write Malay at a native level of proficiency is quite a simple matter. Being a descendent from a Fujian family, she naturally speaks the dialect very fluently. She also knows some Teochew, which is another Chinese dialect. While residing here in a mostly Hispanic district, she has also picked up some simple conversational Spanish through her frequent contacts with her clientele.

Mrs. K's father is a committed advocate and a firm believer in higher education. He is prepared to provide all the children with an education up to whatever level they aspire to. Unfortunately, as Mrs. K relates, most of her siblings are not academically inclined. She reveals that her parents, "are pretty open in education for boys and girls" and her "father will support me even to college." As previously mentioned, her father supported his nephews and nieces financially to universities and colleges.

She states that she is one of the most academically inclined among her siblings. However, her academic career was shortened by the government's imposition of racial quotas for places in Form Six. Being the youngest girl in the family and not wanting her to leave home, her father declined to accede to her request to study in another town. Similarly, her request to go to Australia to

pursue a career in nursing was turned down. She reveals that if she were a male, her father would have permitted her to study in another town. She explains that the decision was based purely on the feelings of anxiety and "overprotectiveness" of having the daughter living far away than on gender discrimination or lack of aspiration for her. She says that if there were higher educational and professional institutions situation within the vicinity of where she stayed, her father would have permitted her to pursue these studies.

She says that her parents are very conservative and "the boys and girls are not treated the same" for good reasons. She does not consider this as gender discrimination. She says, "I can go to school but not out of town" and "he does not want me to be out of sight." [In Chinese family practices fathers are usually over-protective of daughters.]

Since the parents have strong convictions in education, we would expect that they would be very involved in her daily lessons. On the contrary, she says, "My parents were too busy to ask me about my education. This is not because they are not concerned." The reasons were that her father was very committed to community activities and his business while the mother, to household chores. In addition, they would not be in a position to assist her personally as they do not know English and there was the availability of her elder brothers and sisters to help. Although the father is literate in Mandarin, he has no time to tutor any of his children. She relates that her second brother helped her the most, not forgetting that her future husband (Mr. K) was also tutoring her at that time. In addition, her parents also employed tutors to guide her during Form Three (Grade 9) and Form Five (Grade 11) to sit for the compulsory, standardized, public examinations. The parents were supportive in every way except tutoring

her themselves. Her father is very strict with the children but her mother is less so. Her father did not discuss much about what aspirations he had for her. He left this entirely to her to choose her options.

Among the Chinese beliefs of contributing to noble causes in society, the most popular was to donate money to or contribute time and effort towards the building of schools or temples. She finds her father a "strange guy" because he donated his money solely for education and not a dime for the building of temples: "He thinks very highly of education." She notices that his philosophy towards education and community has also been inherited by her other brothers and sisters as they too are committed and involved with education. Her eldest and the youngest brothers are both very involved in religion, which is a departure from her father's preference, but nevertheless, are important contributions to the community.

From her father's philosophy towards education and family life, she acquires the value of not forcing her children to do what they do not want to. She believes education is an important tool to success but not the sole tool. This is a classic example of how the belief in the value of education and its importance to one's progress in society is handed down from one generation to the next in the Chinese community. For her family, although education is taken seriously, the outcome is not reflected in her sibling attaining academic success such as having a college education. Her belief in the value of education is passed down to her children to take academic pursuit with vigor and seriousness.

Working Background

Mrs. K has very little experience in the professional world, after having only worked as a clerk in a private car company for a few months after completing her Form Five education. As she was married soon after her secondary education, she became a dedicated homemaker for the past 16 years. At present, she has to balance her time spent between her second-hand goods business and family chores. She places higher priority on her family duty and responsibility than her own need. She terminated her airline ticketing course at a community college when she finds that she has to compromise her duty and responsibility to the family. For the past three years she experienced a "drastic change in her professional career." She has opened a store, together with the help of her husband, dealing in second-hand goods such as Chinese vases, furniture, clothing, gift items, books, glass-wares, pottery, and whatever goods they think are demanded. Her clients include people involved in the movie industry who need dresses for their film.

She strategically planned her business to balance her commitment to the family. She purposely rented a store located in the vicinity of the schools where her two youngest children are studying so that neither is too distant from her. Through this arrangement, she will be available and can easily reach the school and house in case of emergencies.

When they first arrived in the United States, she was economically inactive because the youngest was just three years old and was too small to send to elementary school. Besides this, "my husband doesn't want me to

work" and the most important consideration is that "we do not want to neglect our children."

Besides spending time minding this store, she and her husband sell at the flea market on weekends, three times a month. Her new interest in antiques has brought back memories of the history lessons she has taken in school where it was presented in a boring, meaningless and unconnected manner, divorced from the reality of life. Now, she says she can see the practical use of history from a different perspective and is very excited on learning a "new" history as she needs to equip herself with the historical facts pertaining to antiques to be able to judge the authenticity and value of the goods. She describes her business returns as "OK, fun and not boring." She has the opportunity to talk to customers and learn a lot of things from them, "instead of staying home doing nothing." To her, this is also a social development process where she can come into contact with other ethnic groups which include Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and other Asians. To foster closer relationship with her more regular customers, she invites them once a year for a free Chinese lunch during the lunar new year.

She is now able to appreciate the beauty in ancient things by noting that they are more beautiful, better made and have unique color effects. She stocks her merchandise with new clothes and other Malaysian products but finds them not greatly demanded. She learns her trade by trial and error and finds that initially her pricing was poor resulting in low profits and at times even losses. Whenever she makes low profits or losses, she takes it philosophically and considers this as a learning process. She says, "You pay to learn." Now she is quite confident in her judgement of the quality, age and value of the antiques

she deals with. She usually buys her antiques from auctions. This occupation gives her great satisfaction as well as a sense of independence and control over her life. She says, "I am my own boss and make my own decisions. I get to meet people and see different things from different parts of the world."

She is unequivocal that her career in the United States is not going to involve any form of studying in colleges. She hopes her business in second-hand goods and antiques can succeed and if it gets off the ground, she aspires to expand it and to build up a bigger clientele. She has a contingency plan in case this business does not prosper. She will go into food business by opening restaurant but she is adamant that she "will not work for somebody."

Socio-economic Status

Mrs. K observes that American people's perception of SES is different from that in Malaysia. She says, "The people in America are not status conscious unlike in Malaysia. They (Malaysians) look down on others. Over here, it is being what you are." [In Malaysia, the level of respect given to individuals is based on the type of occupation one holds and the amount of wealth one has. The interaction with each other is based on such perception. The steep and hierarchical wage structure corresponds to the level of education--the higher the education, the higher is the wage. For instance, being a mechanic, mason, custodian, plumber, electrician, waitresses, or garbage collectors earn low pay and are classified as blue-collar workers. White-collar workers command a higher level of income.] She feels her attitude towards social status is in conformity with the general attitude in America where

one looks at a person rather than how rich the person is. She is not particular with the classification label nor the level she is in; she is more concerned with adequate income to meet daily expenses. For instance, she may be classified as of low SES in America but if she is materially and financially better-off here than in Malaysia, she is happy with it. Although she has to struggle for the past five years, the thought of going on welfare has never entered her consideration because: "I don't think it is right and it is shameful."

Based on her experience of getting a business licence in America for her second-hand goods store, she did not feel discriminated. Neither did she feel racial discrimination is a constraint against her effort at upward mobility when compared to Malaysia. On the contrary, she received encouragement to go into the labor market from the American government bureaucracy. She says, "It is easy to get a licence here." The person in charge of issuing the licence was very "helpful and polite to her. They (American people and government) are happy that you want to work." [In Malaysia, due to the race-based special privileges enshrined in the Constitution for the Malays only, any non-Malay wishing to obtain a licence for whatever purpose is subjected to first, official discrimination in the form of whether the licence is prohibited by law for non-Malays. Second, social discrimination from the government bureaucracy which is monopolized by Malays who, on most occasions, take it upon themselves to mete out racial harassments in various forms ranging from verbal racial epithets, verbal abuses, unreasonable delays and bribery.] The actions she took were planned to move her family up to a higher SES. Her husband relied on his own efforts to be self-independent by becoming a handyman and she

has embarked on the second-hand goods business to hopefully achieve a respectable amount of income.

At present, all her time and effort are focused on her family's well-being and business. This does not leave her any time to get involved in community activities. Furthermore, her top priority is her family welfare. [This prioritization of needs is in conformity with the Confucian edict of taking care of first, the family, the community, then the state]. Second, she says, "I don't like to go around. I am homely. This is due to my upbringing." [In conservative Chinese family, girls are discouraged from gallivanting outside the house which may reflect poorly on the parents' responsibility of upbringing their children. This may also reflect bad moral standing. In present day Chinese family, girls are not encouraged to go out of the house due more to the prevalence of social problems such as rape, violence, robbery and shooting rather than the traditional thinking. A measure of a Chinese girl's worth now is how capable and responsible she is at homemaking, occupation and her salary.] The third reason for not participating in community activities is, she has no desire to do so at present. However, for the first year of her residence in California, she used to volunteer translations for Chinese students in the classrooms. Sometimes, the school would telephone to request for help in translation for new students from China. This was not very frequent as the overall Asian population is only about 5.0% and most of the Asians are Vietnamese.

As a result of her limited participation in community activities, she has few friends but now, since starting her second-hand goods and antique business, she considers herself having more friends. In terms of personal friends who are considered close, she has about 50 while her clientele numbers about 150.

She draws her acquaintances and friends from all races and ethnic groups. She considers all of them generally as very caring and they usually "come to the store to see if everything is all right." She makes friends out of her clientele as well as introductions from other friends.

Attitude Toward Education

She says, "In real life, education is not totally just for the economic future." She concedes, "There is no doubt it is important that with a good education, one can get a good job in future." She believes how well off one is depends on the quality of education one receives, what kind of school one attends, how disciplined is the person, and individual personality type. She thinks that there are certain things we can learn in school but not every aspect of life. She feels informal learning at home is also important. Mrs. K feels that for social development, it is important students receive multicultural education in a multicultural environment where there can be healthy interchange of knowledge and inculcation of respect for others. She addresses the question of whether a single-sex school or a mixed school would be better in determining the development of students, using herself as an example. She attended all-girls school throughout her school life and never mixed with boys. She is uncertain whether it will make any difference in one's personality, outlook or educational development.

Malaysian and American Education Systems Compared

One of the most outstanding differences between Malaysian and American school is in the area of discipline. She finds Malaysian schools very strict. In addition, Malaysians are also very serious and clear in their purpose, as right from grade one, students are prepared to pass the school-based final examinations as well as the various public, standardized examinations. In America, she sees the teaching/learning atmosphere is more relaxed. She expresses her doubt whether an examination-driven education system is better than one that focuses on learning for life. She opines, "Sometimes I see students laboring over textbooks preparing for their examinations" and this arouses her sympathy for the students having to spend so much effort and time studying.

In terms of teacher-student relationships, she finds the Malaysian students more "aloof" and they do not have many rights. Teachers can punish students and at times write to their parents informing them of the students' behavior. As a consequence, students suffer double punishments--one by the teacher and the other by their parents. However, she observes that Malaysian students have more respect for the teachers. Even when a teacher makes a mistake, the students will just keep quiet without challenging the teacher or point out the mistakes. She has very strong reservations about the Malaysian teacher's power to punish students and thinks that at time it is inappropriate and demeaning. For instance, she has witnessed students in Form 3 (9th grade) slapped because they forgot to bring their books to school, caned in front of the public, locked in the cabinet for getting a poor grade, had their homework

pinned on their backs if not done. She thinks some of the punishment are too severe and there are some teachers who took advantage of the parents' and community support for school discipline. She agrees that for gross and violent infringements of school rules and regulations, severe measures should be taken to maintain discipline, but not for the examples she quoted. She thinks punishments should fit the nature and extent of indiscipline. She feels the punishments meted out in Malaysian school will lower the self-esteem of the students.

On the other hand, the American students here are not "afraid" of the teachers at all, in fact, there are cases where the teachers are "afraid" of the students as they (the students) "might get even with them." She thinks the relaxed atmosphere is responsible for the American students becoming "too wild." She cites as examples vandalism committed in schools in the form of uncontrolled spraying of graffiti and breaking of windows. She laments: "someone has to discipline the American students." She considers there are too much punishments in Malaysia and in America, the students are too wild. She hopes there could be a balance of both systems of discipline.

Mrs. K seldom visits the school in America and does not know much about the education system. But of what she knows, she feels the American system is geared more towards producing rounded personality and is not solely concerned with teaching of the three Rs. For instance, her child was taught "how to tie shoe laces in kindergarten and this kind of skill is not taught in Malaysia." At the junior high and high schools, she finds her children have to do more independent assignments, such as school reports. She feels this will help her children "have more initiative." There is more emphasis on writing in

American than Malaysia schools. Using her daughter as an example, she says that her daughter started "writing sentences in grade one and by grade two, writing simple booklets." In contrast, students in Malaysia are subjected to learning by "asking one question and giving one answer" by which is meant students are not expected to be creative nor to give their opinion except the one right answer the teacher expects. This reflects that the curriculum is examination-driven.

Where school-grading is concerned, Malaysian students are normed-referenced and are given positions in class according to overall average of marks scored. However, in the United States, there are no class positions and hence, not much pressure on the children to study hard. There is no competition. She reveals she has no knowledge how her children are graded. She does not notice her children "studying for examinations" but is aware that sometimes, the children face constraint of time in completing their reports and other home assignments.

On her involvement with her children's school work, she finds it difficult to keep track of what the children are learning or to go through the lessons with them as they have no text-books. She says, "I don't know how they [teachers] teach and we cannot teach." When her children were young, she always read to them. Their work at elementary schools were not so complex. She makes brief occasional checks of her children's school and home assignments and at other time, detailed checking of their school progress. She seldom checks Elwin's work because she "doesn't know much" about the contents of his high school course work. She leaves to her son to cope with his work and have him rely on his own initiative and ability to make a good account of himself. So far

he has not disappointed her. She feels that in coping with the demands of academic work, her son has either to "catch up or don't."

The teaching method used by Malaysian teachers is considered more rigid in the sense that students are expected to "do what I tell you." Unlike in America, the students are given more opportunity to "express their opinion, be more independent and to explore more."

Mrs. K finds the relationship between the teachers and her children in America generally positive and warm. All teachers have good relationships with her children, except one who was instructing her second son. She relates that she wanted to inquire about the deterioration of her second son's grades in school. The teacher kept evading her and "just walked away from me when I wanted to talk to him." She finds "the attitude of the teacher was not right". This is her only one "bad experience" with teachers. Otherwise, all the teachers seem to like her children and she has positive experiences with them. She received no complaints of behavioral problems from their teachers. She feels it depends on luck and personalities of individual teacher and student to determine whether they are going to have a positive relationship. She says, "Teachers basically tell you that they don't have much problems with Oriental family and no problem with homework" during conference day. She reveals teachers admitted to her that they have problems with other minority parents where "they don't like it and jump on the teachers" when told that their children are having problems in school. She makes it a point to attend parent-teacher conferences. In Malaysia, there is no provision for parent-teacher conferences in schools. The students' academic performance is noted in report cards given at regular intervals. [Parent-teacher conference is not held in Malaysia because

of the perception that it does not serve useful purpose. Parents are seldom contacted to have a "conference" in school unless there is serious disciplinary problem. Parents too do not request for "conferences" because it would appear they are attempting to interfere with the teachers' and school's effort to teach the children. In addition, school administrators and teachers do not welcome such requests for "conferences." She says, "Sometimes we don't know even the teacher" in Malaysia. She "cannot talk with the teacher in the Chinese school in Malaysia," hence, she has not much experience interacting with the teachers and the school.

Mrs. K finds that when there is contact between schools and the community, it is meant for raising funds through the sale of food such as cakes in United States as well as in Malaysia. She feels that there is not much community-school interactions.

Mrs. K has no knowledge about how teachers are trained in America. She has some opportunities to talk to teachers and knows that American teachers must be credentialled and that teachers are paid more in public than private schools. She is aware that Head Start teachers for preschoolers and kindergartners have to be credentialled and attend some form of training. She is impressed with the pre-school program as it "teaches her youngest child to become independent." Previously, her daughter would "cling" on to her. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on cleanliness like personal hygiene and toilet training.

Mrs. K compares and contrasts the strengths and weaknesses of the two systems of education in Malaysia and the United States. One of the strengths in the Malaysian system of education is that students tend to learn

more languages [three in the case of her children--Mandarin, Malay and English] as they are compulsory. However, in the American school system, it depends on individual needs and initiative to learn more languages. The second strength is that teachers are stricter and maintain good discipline whereas teachers in America are too lenient and sometimes appear to be "scared of the students and their parents." Third, the Malaysian students tend to study harder whereas, the school system in America allows students to determine their own level of study. Fourth, all Malaysian students wear uniforms to schools which sidetracked the problem of association with gang colors.

Mrs. K enumerates the weaknesses in the Malaysian system of education as follows: first, the most obvious one is the preoccupation of students with studying for examinations whereas the American education is geared towards making a student more "rounded" and teaching is not specifically intended for examinations. She feels there is a good grounding for motor skills in American schools too. Second, in Malaysia is strict official imposition of racial quotas for admissions into colleges and universities regardless of abilities whereas in America, it was not widely practised, although there have been some illegal set-asides. Third, education in Malaysia is hierarchical and age-determined whereas in the United States, there is a higher age limit imposed in schools and "even 80-year-olds can receive an education" at post-secondary levels. Thus, there is absolutely "no second chance" in formal public education for students passed a certain age. Fourth, the Malaysian system is bogged down with bureaucratic procedures whereas the American system is more practical and open. She says, "I feel great to be able to walk into school and have an

education." She feels that her "kids are given every chance to succeed." Fifth, she is very appreciative that her "kids can go to any school without having to spend money on textbooks." [In Malaysia, although there is a free textbook-loan scheme implemented in schools, it has certain disqualification clauses such as parental income and the number of siblings in school. Hence, not all students can benefit from this text-book loan.] Overall, she appreciates the education system here.

Compatibility of the American Education System to Children's Needs

In evaluating the compatibility of the American system of education to her children's and her needs, she is satisfied with it. Of utmost importance to her is that all her children like the school system in America and this is satisfying confirmation of their decision to immigrate here. She finds the education system is not so "pressurized." It is compatible with all her children's idea of schooling and her expectation from education. She is still unnerved by the incidents of her neighbor's kids in Malaysia committing suicide due to academic failure. Failure to score all distinctions in examinations are considered a tragedy. She can still visualize vividly how Malaysian students have to go through the rituals of attending "after-school tuitions and studying all the time." [In Malaysia, due to the competitive nature of achieving the best grades possible, parents and students have resorted to seek assistance from individuals or private companies providing academic tutoring. Fees are charged by these individuals and private companies and students are given extra academic lessons and practices in academics.] She is glad that in

America, "there is not as much pressure as over there." Her philosophy toward learning is that as long as her kids "are trying their best and their grades are okay", she does not want to push them. She also believes that some kids are intellectually endowed while others are not by saying, "not everybody has the same brain." She relates that her children study on their own and her job is to keep track of their progress and to remind them daily whether they have finished their homework and "once in a while go through their homework and test papers." Her children too knew that "it is their job to study, to do their homework first before having free time."

Her children are adjusting well to American schools and up to the present, she has not received any complaints from them about schools, teachers or peers. There has been no complaints of academic or social problems. Among some of the coping strategies that she has conveyed to her children are: "never to get into fights, avoid violence and problems."

In future, she hopes the American system of education will get better. However, she has heard that the American system "is going down and the grades are falling." She guesses that the standard has somewhat been prevented from further drastic fall, due to the coming of new immigrants.

Mrs. K leaves the question of what her children will pursue after high school to them but she is sanguine about her children pursuing a college education, at least. For their professional training and career, she leaves to her children to make the choice. She says, "I will let them do what they want." She wants them to do something that they really like. She recounts that her first son, likes engineering and flying. Her second son is doing average in school but she sees he is more inclined towards doing business as he has "the gift of the

gap." She says that although he is interested in business, he has to have at least a college education. Her third son is still small and she expects him to go as far as he can. Her last child, a daughter is doing extremely well in school. She is at present attending a "gifted" class. She believes that "life is not only money, or more than bringing in money."

Impact of American Values on Education

Being brought up in one culture and presently immersed in another which are different, demands a lot of adjustments. Mrs. K states that she is "raised differently from the American way." Her stand on matters related to Chinese and American cultures is that she "does not want to follow any culture blindly." She wants to "pick up whatever is good." One of the Chinese cultural traits that she finds so different from that of the American is the respect for elders. Despite being surrounded by American culture that is quite distinct from hers, she insists on "teaching my kids to respect elders. I cannot be raising them like the American kids yelling at parents." She considers this terribly wrong and has to ensure that her children do not behave his way, "no matter what!" She wants her children not only to respect Chinese elders but also any other American elders. Her rationale is that, "If you respect elders, even to an American, you will be looked at from a different viewpoint. They will also like and respect you."

Why do American children lack respect for elders? She attributes this to their way of life. She says that the blame is not the kids' alone but also that of adults. She observes that American adolescents, sixteen or eighteen years of

age, are asked by their parents to go to work. Besides this, the children of those parents who are on welfare are seen roaming the streets. She considers this wrong and the parents "need to take care of them and they will, in turn look after their parents later in life."

Mrs. K considers there should be no intimate hugging between parents and child. This could lead to incest or rape as frequently reported in the press. This is considered not acceptable to her as these acts are the acts of "dogs and cats and we are human beings." She feels strongly that this behavior "should not be copied, no matter what!"

She finds American society too permissive to the extent that children became "wild when they let them do what they like." She advocates for a clear distinction between the role of parents and children. Without a clear demarcation of roles, "I don't know who is heading the family; who tells who to do things." Her stand is that for certain things, adults definitely know more than children and will be able to guide them. On the responsible role that adults should have she says,

As parents, we have a right to tell them what to do. It is easy to do bad.

For example, laziness. If children are allowed to go on they will continue.

It is the duty of the parents to remind the children, for example, to do their homework.

She surmises that the cause is in the social laws where "you cannot push the kids and the parents are afraid to take action." [She is referring to the laws formulated to prevent child abuse. It also made it illegal for teachers, neighbors and others not to report cases of suspected abuse to the authorities.] She finds there are cases where parents dare not discipline their children for fear of these

laws. In contrast, she reveals the neighbors in Malaysia would not interfere and "do not mind when the parents are disciplining the kids even beating them." She observes that the "kids here cannot be taught when young and when they grow taller they will be out of control." Her strategy of disciplining her children is first, to resort to "talk" and if it still does not work then the kids will be punished but it is "not to hurt them." This is drawn from her experience growing up under a strict father who did not have to resort to corporal punishments.

One Chinese cultural trait that fits well with the American society is competitiveness. She says the Chinese have the habit of competing "to win and not to lose." However, she feels that if there is too much stress on competition, it is not good either. When she reflects on the routine her nieces have to go through such as "after coming home from school, they have to attend after-school tuition and most of their time is taken up with studying and studying, they miss this part of their childhood." She feels that a balance is called for.

Mrs. K took practical action to resolve any differences in her cultural practices that do not fit in with the mainstream culture. Due to the small number of Chinese students, she does not expect a public holiday for her children as was done in Malaysia on the occasion of the Lunar New Year. She declares a holiday for her children every year where everyone stays home to celebrate instead of making a fuss about it to the school authorities. Whenever there was an invitation from the school for her to give a talk on Chinese Lunar New Year, she would gladly do so, so as to help inform others about her culture.

Reaction to Allegations for Some Minority Students' Failure

Regarding the blame attributed to certain school practices that some minority parents allege as causes of their children doing poorly in school, Mrs. K does not agree. Mrs. K does not find much to complain about the American system of education. She does not take issue with the content of the school curriculum as long as her children are doing well in school. She does not see the curriculum, the potential or real discrimination in labor market, or the prejudice of teachers as credible justifications for blame if her children are not doing well in school. This has happened to her second son. Owing to the composition of her neighborhood, she says that a lot of Black history and Hispanic history were taught in school. She has no problem with this but has heard that there were some complaints from White parents. Since the school student population is very multicultural, she and her children find no adjustment problems nor find the school teachers discriminatory on racial grounds. She is very practical and realistic about this saying that "everywhere you go, generally there is discrimination. They do not do it openly." She gave the example of big European companies where they would not give the top positions to Asians as they "want their own kind to be on top." She says that the labor market reason [some sociologists have postulated that as Black students rationalize that they will eventually be denied job opportunity due to racial discriminations, there is no justification for them to study diligently in schools] and the communication mismatch between teachers and students as excuses for educational failures. She argues that there are a lot of Blacks that are successful. She believes the failure of some Black students is due to the family problems, as "the failure of

the single family home where they have no father to guide them. For a lady [referring to single mother], they cannot do much." She explains that what is important is "the cycle of life is followed by example." [By this statement she meant to explain that how a child behaves or what a child becomes is a product of the examples s/he sees through the actions of parents.]

Bilingual Education

Mrs. K thinks that bilingual education is the teaching of at least two languages in school like what is practised in Malaysia. After receiving some explanations from the researcher on the nature of bilingual education in America, she expresses her willingness to send all her children to Chinese-English bilingual education, if one is available. Her reasons for wanting her children to be in this program are that they will gain an extra language, they can maintain their culture and there is advantage in knowing Mandarin for career purposes because of the growing importance of China as a world market.

Gender Issues

In traditional China and for some more traditional Chinese parents residing outside of China, there has been and still is a preference for a male child over the female. However, in Malaysia Mrs. K finds that only some Chinese families who are very traditional would prefer males to females.

She gives the following reasons for this preference. The first is that only the male heirs "carry down the name" of the family. Second, when girls marry,

they are "given to others", that is, married out of the household where she is considered to "belong" to the husband's family. Third, when parents retire, they "look to the boys to take care of them when they grow old." However, in Malaysia, the present situation is different as girls are "more homely" and they think more of the parents. She says: "When the boys get married, we don't see them around."

Mrs. K discusses the issue of caring for elderly parents as dependent on "how you bring up the boys" and also, the "time has changed." Other changing circumstances are the contributions made by parents to the Employees' Provident Fund (somewhat akin to social security) in Malaysia. This tends to make the parents less dependent on their children. To her, having a son or a girl is not crucial, the most important being how they are brought up. She is more concerned with whether her children are healthy and are "good." She states that "this doesn't matter to me anymore--maybe I'm a bit modern in this." She attributes this probably to the influence of her father whom she considers as "pretty modern" in his thinking on gender issue and her mother, being a businesswoman since her marriage as pretty "liberated." Her father is not "traditional" in the sense that he would not forbid her to work if she wanted to. On the contrary, he encouraged her to do so. Other evidence of her parents' openness was allowing her and her other sister to attend English-medium schools.

In relating how this preference for males over females is being translated into practice, she says, "As a girl I feel that I was restricted in a lot of ways. I do not have as much freedom as the boys to go places like to dance parties or camping." Hence, she has no opportunity to join the girl guides. This was also

due to the "over-protectiveness" of her parents. However, in other aspects, she finds that she was not discriminated on account of her gender as compared to her brothers, for instance, in education or seeking a career.

Comparison of Gender Issue in Malaysia and America

In comparing the treatment of genders by the Malaysian Chinese community to those in America, she says that generally, females in the United States enjoy more equal rights with the males. However, in terms of education, girls in Malaysia are encouraged to go as high as they possibly can which is similar to that in the United States. In spite of this encouragement for girls in higher education, there is a concern by some Chinese parents over their opportunity to find suitable mates in statement like "don't study too high, otherwise you cannot find a husband." This is attributed to the Malaysian men still "having an ego not to marry a wife who is better educated than they do." She finds this kind of feeling present in America but to a much lesser degree. In terms of occupation, there is strong discrimination in Malaysia against females participating in certain occupations where they are barred such as fire-fighters, commercial pilot, and certain military positions. In occupations where females are allowed to enter, they usually occupy "lower-position jobs." She finds at present, there are increasing numbers of women holding "good" jobs due to the changing time. Another instance of Malaysian women being discriminated is that they cannot marry foreigners as their husbands will not be given citizenship. She notices that women in the United States work harder than the men. She finds women going to hardware stores to purchase materials for

repairing homes or cars. In Malaysia, the women do not want to handle these jobs, preferring "to call on their brothers or other guys or pay workman to do them." This could also be due to the high cost of workmanship in America. She is impressed that some American women here even change the engine oil of cars.

Mrs. K considers that in Chinese society, women have been "assigned" the most important job of looking after the welfare of the family in accordance with the Confucian ideal. In Malaysia, she states that this homemaker role is not considered to be discriminatory or demeaning to the woman. It is seen as a division of labor where the general well-being or success of the family is determined greatly by how well the women discharge their duty. This is reflected in the proper behavior and conduct of their children. Predictably, basing on her upbringing, Mrs. K sees the role of women basically as "having a family and to keep the family together." She compares:

Malaysian women are more tolerant than U.S. women as far as marriage is concerned. There is give and take. But over here, it is easy for husband and wife to go your way and I go mine. In Malaysia, a woman has wider responsibility towards family life. No matter how much problems there are in the marriage, they have to hold on to it to keep the family together.

She expresses the social stigma that accompanies a divorcee--the shame that will befall the family. [In Chinese culture, a marriage is considered as the coming together of two families rather than two individuals.] She says, "Basically, the role of a woman is to show good example as a daughter, as a mother and to show respect for the in-laws." Furthermore, the prospect of

another failed marriage after a divorce is also a good reason to stick to the first marriage and try to make it work.

She says that women are brought up differently in Malaysia and play different roles. For instance, for a businessman, he may have to entertain clients up to two or three in the morning while the wife looks after the kids. In terms of entertainment, "Malaysian women like it too, but they have no choice." American women are capable of looking after themselves and are more independent. This may be due to the fact that they are working women. On the other hand, she is aware that in Malaysia there are a lot of career women who are also housewives and "they try to keep a marriage and family together."

For Mrs. K, girls should be given the opportunities to pursue education to "as high a level as they possibly can attain, even a Ph.D." In the pursuit of this high education, she considers there can be good and bad consequences. The good consequences being that a girl can "get a good job, be independent and have a future of their own. She does not need to depend on the man." However, the unfavorable consequence would make it harder for them to get married in Malaysia. She opines that a Chinese woman in America would "want to marry an Asian man and when her paper qualification is high, the man would be scared. Asian men do not want their wife to be highly qualified because of their ego unless they were childhood friends." She also thinks that women may become stubborn as a result of their high academic qualification.

With regard to the choice of traditional or non-traditional occupation, Mrs. K thinks that time has changed and women have wider choice of occupations. She feels that every woman should "have the right to be what they want to be, for example, engineers as long as they like the job and can excel in

it." The reasons she thinks most women go for the traditional jobs are because they are the jobs that cross their mind the most and perhaps because of their maternal instinct, for instance, becoming teachers where they can stay at home to take care of the children during school vacations or because they are more caring in the case of becoming nurses. She declares, "You don't expect men to do that." Present-day women are "more educated, free and conscious of what they want to do." Other family situation that may compel women to engage in nontraditional occupation when "the husband chooses not to have a career of his own and the woman has no choice but to get one herself."

Adjustment to American society/culture

Although United States is a new country to her she did not experience cultural shock when she first arrived as is frequently felt by recent immigrants entering a different environment. This could be due to being brought up in a multi-ethnic society like Malaysia and to her experience staying in Europe for about five months accompanying her husband on a professional training course. This was in 1989 when she was 27 years of age. She says, "It wasn't much of a shock." However, she feels that it was not easy to give up everything in Malaysia to move to America without "owning a house and having to rent an apartment." One of the most difficult things for her to get used to when she initially arrived were the rules and regulations she had to observe. For instance, she cannot hang clothings outside the apartment to dry. Her neighbors complained. This would not happen in Malaysia because the neighbors would be doing the same thing. On the other hand, her uneasiness

over the interference of such a minor issue as hanging clothes is counter-balanced by the overwhelming generosity of the people. She says, "The people are pretty okay." She relates that when she first arrived she had nothing and the neighbors, both Whites and Asians gave her "clothes, furniture, and many household stuffs." She appreciates this tremendously and considers the American society a "giving" society where the people are willing to "give a hand. They are nice in this way." This differs greatly from the Malaysian society where giving of household things is mostly restricted to relatives. In America, she finds many household chattels are left by the roadside for whoever has a need for them.

The second moving experience happened when she registered her children in school. There was done without even a "query and my children were accepted readily." She was also very impressed and thankful that American teachers "take the trouble to teach one-on-one and this is something very special. I don't think this will happen in Malaysia." This happened when Elwin initially needed assistance badly in his English.

American and Chinese Culture Compared

There are numerous differences in culture between America and Malaysia "in small and big ways." For instance, the festivities and celebrations are different. Christmas is celebrated in a big way in America, while in Malaysia, it is only confined to the Christians and was not considered a very important or major occasion. Furthermore, there are Thanksgiving and

Halloween festivals. In Malaysia, the most important festival is the Lunar New Year followed by the moon-cake festival and the dumpling festival.

In the mode of dressing, Americans are not so status conscious and "I can see them wear anything from the very hip to the shabby." In Malaysia, people are particular about dress and it is difficult to "walk out on the street in an ordinary T-shirt or to attend any ordinary dinner in it." One has to dress up according to what is expected, otherwise, there will be unsolicited comments and criticisms. Although there are places in America where one has to dress appropriately, there is the absence of fuss over dress code. In Malaysian schools, "all students have to wear uniforms but over here shabby shorts and see-through shirts and dresses are permitted, which are not proper."

On the non-conforming behavior of some of society's anti-social groups, she observes there is a blatant display of gangsterism in America and "it is too wild." Although there are gangs in Malaysia, but they are more "reserved and do not do it so openly." This could be due to the lenient treatment of criminals and the permissiveness in society.

Mrs. K finds there is a great difference in the social relationship between generations in America and Malaysia. In America, she observes that there is "no respect for elders here." When this is translated into practice, she finds children are not well taken care of by adults whereas in Malaysia, they are taken care of "out of love and duty." In America, when parents live with their children, they have to pay rent and vice-versa for an adolescent living in their parents' house. She notices that American parents are "not very capable at controlling kids." Hence, they are "wilder than Malaysian children." Malaysian parents have "more hold over the kids." She guesses this could be due to the

laws forbidding parents from disciplining children which are often construed as child abuse. American parents have to "give in until they have no say." This places parents in a helpless situation and they do not know what to do with their children. They just "let them be what they are. In the end, everybody loses." [She is referring to the various child abuse laws which she perceives as too lopsided and too drastic in taking away the parents right to discipline their children. The laws are being abused in many cases by children to threaten their parents.]

Coping with Differences

Mrs. K's attitude toward any obstacles resulting from cultural differences is to find solutions instead of complaining. She has "to conquer the problems." Initially, when Mrs. K arrived in the US, the Americans did not understand what she was saying because of her accent. Through time, as she became more familiar with the American way of speaking and through her conscious attempt to speak more slowly, part of the problem at communication was solved. She has good rapport with the neighbors and other Americans. She finds them "interested to know where you come from and to learn about the society you come from. They don't envy where you are from." She detects that the Americans admire the hardship and struggle she and her family have gone through, especially when they knew "how hard we worked."

Her other strategy is to prioritize and be realistic. For instance, when her family first arrived, her husband preferred working as a handyman rather than in the comfort of an air-conditioned place such as Kentucky Fried Chicken where

the wage will not even be sufficient to pay for the rent. Although the United States economy was in recession when they arrived in 1990, her husband refused to work for somebody. She wished her husband could work for somebody like in Malaysia where he could get a regular pay-check and not to worry about health-care insurance. Her family has no health insurance coverage since they arrived. But "as a wife, I don't want to force him to do what he doesn't like." Her strategy is to "do one thing at a time." For the survival of the family, she is willing to sacrifice and take up whatever job there is available, even to the extent of "washing toilets." She reveals that the first five years were a struggle, when they had to work very hard just to be able to pay the rent of the apartment. She feels she is now on better footing.

On the question of racial discrimination in hiring practice, she says it is understandable that people from a particular race prefer to hire someone from the same racial background. Her coping strategy can be summarized in her own words:

We cannot keep on waiting and waiting. If we sit and wait is not to our advantage. We have to take one route or another and turn it to our advantage. It would be better to do something than to complain.

This is exemplified by her husband taking on the job of a handyman to become independent rather than to become an employee. The work of a handyman is meant to be a temporary stop-gap measure and as better opportunities arise, the strategy is to leave this job.

In coping with the dictates of this new society, she says "they have sacrificed a lot and now they were able to start a business of their own." Her main reason to get this business going is to prevent her husband from over-

exerting himself. She says, "I don't want him to work so hard and if my business is successful, he does not have to be a handyman anymore."

Mrs. K is optimistic about the future and is confident that "life can improve." So far, she has learned how to be independent and this is a completely new phenomenon to her as she has all the time been dependent on her husband economically. Her husband was a government employee earning sufficient income for her to be a full-time housewife. If there is one experience that she cherishes the most her experience in America, is the value of independence. She is "more confident as a person and enjoy the freedom now. This gives me a new concept of work." She speculates that even if the owner of the second-hand goods store wants to terminate the contract, she "has no fear as I can do something else. I have build up the confidence and can look for something to live by."

When she encounters problems, she depends on her own initiative and assistance of friends to tackle them. For instance, when she wanted to start her antique business, she had no inkling at all where to begin. She relied on the yellow pages of the telephone directory to contact any relevant agency to ask for information besides her inquiries from friends. Her strategy was to "call from one to another until I hit the target." She discovers the most important strategy is to "talk and ask anyone who knows something."

The most important difference she considers her children have to cope with are the cultural differences in schools. She says it was difficult initially for her children to cope with English language as the first two children had only attended Chinese-language schools in Malaysia. It took them a few months to settle down. Another difference she finds her children had to cope with is the

comparison of their social and economic position with other American children. For instance, her children pointing out other American children their age are having fun while they have to do household chores and that American children are paid for baby-sitting their younger brothers and sisters. However, simple rationalizations and parental examples were sufficient to convince them of the futility of such comparisons. She acknowledges that when her children witnessed how hard their father is working and the absurd request for her children to pay rent now, are sufficient for her children to realize the foolish comparison. As a further strategy, she relates to them the past easy life in Malaysia where they did not have to do household chores to demonstrate the changing situation. She explains from the point of view of the cultural differences and expectations between American and Chinese families. Her children have to help in house work such as laundry, vacuuming carpet and washing dishes. She says, "They have to help and they understood the need for this when they see that their parents work seven days a week from seven in the morning to eight at night." Her two eldest sons sometimes accompany their father to work as handyman. Mrs. K turns it into a lesson for them that knowledge in simple house repairs will benefit them in future. Basing on her own experience, she is convinced that "one can learn things fast if one is willing to." She relates how she "did not even know how to cook, ride a bicycle or drive a car before marriage. All these were taught by my husband." This is due to her family being too "protective" of her and she did not learn how to do things on her own. Her philosophy now is that "having too good a life is bad."

She finds all her children adjusted to the American life well as they do not bring back problems from school. They did not seek her advice for any problem, hence she assumes that they are adjusting well to school and society.

There may be small instances of "cultural clash" for her in America and the best way Mrs. K sees to defuse the situation is to "sit down and discuss." For herself, she used to explain to customers the normal American behavior of touching and hugging as it applies to Asians. She feels uneasy over this habit. Her explanation is that she is a married woman and the physical contact with the opposite sex is considered inappropriate behavior. [Confucian moral code of conduct.] However, she admits that sometimes it is not possible to avoid altogether as it involves close friends. She feels it is becoming less "strange" and "objectionable" due to acculturation.

In case of any conflict involving her children that could lead to violence, she advises them to avoid it. She sees there is "no point in fighting". For instance, between different racial gangs.

Positive and Negative Aspects of American Culture

There are certain aspects of American culture that Mrs. K finds enriching and should be emulated to a certain extent. She notices that American parents are like "buddies" to their children. They take a keen interest in what their children are doing, for instance, American parents taking their children to see places, playing games, watching their games, and attending meetings concerning them. However, in Malaysian society, she alleges that "many parents do not know at all what their kids are doing." She speculates the

reason as parents being too busy earning a living to feed the family. Malaysian parents usually "leave everything to the kids and hope everything will be all right."

Another important aspect of the American culture that should be emulated is the habit of "American parents finding time to listen to their kids and paying attention when they are talking to each other." She feels that Malaysian Chinese parents are too demanding in their expectation that their children should respect them even to the extent of not wanting to listen to what the children are saying. She prefers that children do not accept blindly what the parents say because they could be wrong. Malaysian Chinese parents "should bow down and listen to the children."

The American culture that Mrs. K finds disagreeable, conflicting or problematic is in the manner of dressing. She thinks that American people are too "wild" in their dressing, some with "a lot of tattoos and even the males pierce their ears." They are "too exposed and funky." She finds that the image one projects is still important and what "one projects outside is what people see and form opinion about you." She agrees with what her husband who has warned their children, "Don't ever come back with your ears pierced!"

Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese Culture

Language (Mandarin) is one of the most important aspects of Chinese culture that she does not want her children to lose for cultural as well as economic reasons. Second, is the Chinese food they eat. Third, she feels that Chinese traditions such as the festivals should be retained, specifically the

Chinese Lunar New Year, dumpling festival, and lantern festival. She is well informed of the history behind every festival and the significance of every action involved. For instance, lunar new year is the first day of the Chinese calendar, the significance of red color (signifies luck), the giving of red packet to the elders (to show respect), to children and unmarried persons (for luck), the intentional surplus cooking for the new year's reunion dinner (to signify that there is something extra for the next year, viz, they will not be found wanting).

Mrs. K feels that the practice of elders wielding too much power over children as authoritarian with the assumption that they are always right should be discarded. For this, she has an infuriating experience when her uncle and aunt took advantage of this Chinese "generational authority" to bully her. She makes a distinction between respect and unthinking behavior by saying, "respect is one thing and to obey blindly is another." She alleges that "tradition expects one to follow blindly." She finds American society is on the other extreme that "they teach kids to be selfish and this is wrong too." [She is referring to the American cultural trait of individualism. It can be deduced that she prefers a middle position between respect, blind obedience and selfishness.]

Generational Conflicts

She reveals that she has no problems with any of her children to the extent of considering it a generational conflict. Her philosophy on child-rearing practice is that she does not want to be too strict with them, neither does she want them to be without respect for elders. Basing on her knowledge of the

strictness her father have in his relationship with all her siblings, she feels it was too extreme to the extent that all her brothers have to go through her to convey their requests to their father. Her father has been too strict a disciplinarian. Even now, she finds there is not much intimate relationship between her brothers and her father where they cannot hold a meaningful conversation. Their "conversation" is limited to one or two words respectful addresses. She has no problem in communicating with all her children. What she is fearful is the relationship between her husband and the sons. She finds him very strict with their sons, particularly the eldest one. She hopes her husband can adopt to a certain extent the camaraderie relationship of the American parents with their children. She hopes her husband can be a "buddy" to the sons and a parent when there is a need. She alleges that "if the relationship is too strict, the kids won't be close and there is no point." Her strategy on establishing close relationship with her children is "first to be based on love and then only discipline."

Mrs. K finds that there are certain things her children do which she does not agree but she tolerates them as "passing fads because they are still young." She is confident the children will be able to appreciate their Chinese culture later when they are bigger. She is optimistic because she seen Americanized Chinese youths going to Chinese restaurant using chopsticks to eat. She has also seen Chinese children mixing with other Chinese. She predicts that Chinese children will retain their own culture and pass on to their future generations based on the fact that "Chinese have been here for more than 200 years and are able to retain their culture. Have no fear on that." She quotes the consumption of ginseng as a source of nourishing food is still being practised.

She says that when isolated and alone, "we tend to think that we will lose our culture."

Racial Discrimination

As the Malaysian constitution provides for discrimination based on race, Mrs. K was one of the first victims in her pursuit of higher education when the government implemented the quota against Chinese students going to pre-university classes. She was in the first batch of students to suffer the brunt of racial quota. In business, she relates that it is harder to get a licence in Malaysia than in America. She quotes as an example, if a Chinese were to apply for an import licence, the application will be rejected without hesitation unless the Chinese has a Bumiputra ("son-of-the soil" referring to Malays and other indigenous people) as a partner. She is very happy she does not have to face such problem to obtain a business licence in America. On the contrary, personnel in the licensing department encouraged and welcomed her attempt to go into business. This is another "greatness" that she finds in American society. As for her experience at racial discrimination in America, she relates she has only one bad experience so far.

At one time there was a Black guy who came into my store, looked at me and straight away said, "You are going to be expensive." Then he walked out of the store. At that moment I was shocked to find him saying that. He didn't even ask for the price of the good. He looked at me being an Asian and came out with his statement.

This was her first experience at being judged in a racial manner by the look of the color of her skin. She was shocked principally because she always attempts to avoid being racist and her attitude is to regard everyone as a person, she "does not care whether a person is rich or poor, red, black or green." Her personal belief is that, "if you want to migrate to a land where all kinds of people live together, you have to blend in as a part. You cannot be alone and stand out." She insists that all human beings should be able to tolerate other races and this was shaped by her beliefs in Buddhist philosophy.

On the whole, she finds there is less discrimination in America than in Malaysia. To quote another simple everyday example, she says that when she passes through American customs, the custom officer wishes her with a simple "Welcome back." However, when she passes through Malaysian custom, she would be asked a lot of irrelevant questions and some of them border on racial harassment. She relates the unfortunate experience of a Chinese girl from Sabah (one of the states in Malaysia), who is not conversant in Bahasa Malaysia being questioned in a derogatory fashion. The girl was asked why she does not know the language. [Instances of such racial discriminations on a social and official basis abound in Malaysia. For instance, government clerks refusing to serve non-Malays if they do not speak Malay, intentionally refusing to serve the public by pretending to look for things or leave the counter all together, shouting at the public, asking inappropriate questions of females with sexual overtones.]

Mrs. K believes that the best way to reduce racial discriminations is for everyone to understand each others' culture. For instance, it is the culture that makes the Koreans unsmiling; or how the Asians do not touch each other when

conversing with the opposite sex and avoid hugging because "we are not used to it." She relates that it is "very rough behavior for some Koreans grocer to just throw the change to the customer." She suggests that there could be more inter-racial sports, getting different races and ethnicities to meet at places of worship such as churches and temples or neighbors sharing food at potluck parties. In school, she has seen local school teachers teach about different cultures but would like them to do more. She hopes the different races and ethnicities could get along better.

Mrs. K feels that one need not have to abandon one's culture in order to succeed in American society but rather there should be different degrees of adjustments. She is cognizant of the fact that if someone wants to climb on top of the social and corporate ladder, one "may have to let go some of the culture where one has to talk and eat like them (mainstream American)." Her philosophy is, "If you cannot beat them, join them." She qualifies this belief in that if one is economically independent, one need not have to forsake one's culture in order to succeed. In many cases, it is one of adjustment depending on the situation. She quotes as an example her husband's habit of talking to her in Mandarin in the presence of their non-Chinese customers. Although they are not talking about their customers but she feels that in their (customer's) perception they may be talking about them. She says, "at that moment, it is not a choice between customer or culture." It is common sense and sensitivity toward the customers and not to "make them feel uncomfortable." Her other example of temporary "abandonment" is in the corporate sector, where it is common for executives to attend dinners and dances; although these social activities are not common in Asian society, "one has no choice but to do it."

Another instance is the giving of three kisses. To her one has to "drop one's culture temporarily at the moment when the situation calls for it."

Gains and Losses from Immigration

Mrs. K expresses her ambivalence on whether her immigrating to America is for the better or worse. She found it emotional and difficult to take the flight out of Malaysia. She experienced mixed emotions of "guts, courage, determination, disappointment and tears." On the plus side, she is convinced her children will receive a good education; will enjoy more freedom here than in Malaysia; will enjoy a higher real income on account of cheaper material goods and foods; and will have more opportunities for doing business. She learned for the first time how to be independent economically and derived satisfaction from the fact that she is able to earn enough to survive and not be dependent on welfare. On the whole, she characterizes her life for the past five years as satisfactory.

However, on the minus side, the loss of family contacts was the most difficult for her to adjust to. She misses "basic things of what used to be part of our culture that we see and do everyday like just walking out to the hawker's stall to have something to eat." Second, she is disappointed that America, being the richest country in the world cannot afford to provide basic health services to its citizens. She says that since arriving here, all her family members do not have medical insurance as she cannot afford to buy them. Third, as usual with family in transition, she has to cope with some family problems which, otherwise, she need not have to confront before such as family

"fights" due to the pressure of adjusting to a new environment. Fourth, she also experiences changes in life-style from what is considered "normal" to what is new. For her, she has to adjust from a full-time housewife to a working woman and her husband does not take it very well that she has to struggle now. She describes the problems adjustment has produced as "little things becoming big."

Model Minority

Mrs. K is aware that the Chinese have been labelled as the "model minority" and she defines that as being "doing okay in America." She alludes that "a lot of people look up to the Chinese" in general and also "look up to our kids" as students. From the economic point of view and basing on her own experiences of being able to open a store within five years of immigrating to America, many people are surprised that she did it. She had been asked, "How do you do it so fast?" She believes the answer to that is "we work harder and we worked our kids harder than others." To reiterate, she says that when she sends her children to study Mandarin on Saturday, her friends were surprised. They asked, "Are you sure today is Saturday?" She has heard from teachers their opinion about Oriental students as being "obedient, study hard" and they "look down on black students." She is aware that although the percentage of Chinese in the total American population is small, the percentage of students in prestigious colleges and universities is high in proportion.

Reasons Chinese Students Are Excelling in Schools

She wonders whether the factors that contributed to the "model minority" label are due to hard work, flexibility in tackling different challenging situations, genetic, parents pushing their children, being stricter, imposing more rules on their behavior or placing great importance on education. She thinks that when Chinese go into business and become successful, it could be due to their ability "not to let adverse circumstances overwhelm them."

There are pros and cons in being labelled the "model minority." She is aware that not all Chinese are smart in education as there are a lot of Asians doing poorly in schools. There are many Asian parents facing great problems learning English and Asian students who fail miserably in schools. She is also aware that there are "a lot of useless Chinese too like drug addicts, alcoholics and those earning just enough to survive." Hence, it is not necessarily true that all Chinese are "model minority", "otherwise, Chinese will rule over the whole world."

Impact of Model Minority Status

She knows that Chinese are disadvantaged as a result of being labelled the "model minority" because many students cannot get admissions into good universities due to the "quota" placed on them. This label will impact adversely on those students who are not excelling in education and "they will feel more depressed." Other minority students will just accept the fact that they are not doing well but for the Chinese, "it will have a bad psychological impact"

especially on those students who "cannot catch up with their English language and who cannot express themselves."

Mrs. K thinks that only Elwin is aware of such a label. He studies hard and "a lot of students look up to him." What is the impact on him? She says "in a certain way, he is proud." He is also proud that he knows an extra language. She relates that her youngest child, when asked by her teacher to write her name on the board in Mandarin, was very proud of herself. This raises her self-esteem. She notes that her son is treated differently in terms of getting privileges in class like more time and opportunity playing with computer when he has finished his Mathematics assignment ahead of other students. Other than this, she feels that all her children have been treated fairly as they have no complaints about teachers, students and schools.

The Future

She is devoting herself to her business selling second-hand goods and antique. She hopes she will be able to make her business better and be able to expand it with branches in different locations. Her business is an "insurance" for her children so that "those who can't do well in study can go into this business to make as good an income as those academically inclined." She has an alternative option to open a restaurant specializing in Malaysian-style cooking. Educationally, she does not want to study anymore. The reason being that she is getting old and wants to provide this opportunity to her children. In her retirement, which she foresees in another 30 years' time, she plans to stay in the United States and to travel with her husband all over the country and

perhaps the whole world. She plans to spend her time at home and to provide voluntary assistance to school children. She also likes to volunteer looking after senior citizens. She likes to do voluntary work emulating her father and family members in future but right now she does not have the time. She has weathered the drastic change in life style from being a total housewife to a business woman and from a life of ease to a life full of challenges. She does not foresee how life will be changed as a result of the changing society but she is certain of one fact--that she will "blend in to the best she can."

As for the future career of her children, she wants to leave the choice completely to them. She does not wish to impose her ideas on them. She prefers to take the position of an advisor giving the pros and cons and to act as an advocate for them. She wants to let them make the final decision. She believes that if she forces her children to do what they do not like, she will "make their life miserable and life is too short for that." As for their education, she wants to support them to whatever level they aspire to. As for her children's involvement in community affairs and how they will react to changes in society, she does not want to speculate. She feels it is irrelevant for her to think for them as "they will not be the same as us. They study here." She is confident they will blend into the American society.

Mrs. K wants herself and her children to become bicultural as, "Bicultural is the way because I want them to enjoy whatever they can in America." She wants her children to retain some basic important Chinese culture such as respect for elders, industriousness, filial piety, and Chinese festivals, especially Chinese New Year. She does not mind her children celebrating American culture such as Halloween, Christmas, Thanksgiving and Independence Day.

In fact, her husband enjoys taking part in celebrating all kinds of festivities inclusive of American ones. He particularly enjoys decorating for the occasions. During Thanksgiving, Mrs. K even invites Whites neighbors, clients and friends who are single and living independently, to her dinner. Similarly, for the Chinese New Year she cooks to give all her clients a treat. Her intention is to share the Chinese culture with others and hopes that her children will do the same in future. She says that she is "open" from this point of view.

Reflections

In reflecting the ups and downs of the past five years, Mrs. K is filled with mixed emotions as to whether the family has made the correct choice to migrate as she "sometimes feel regretful and sometimes don't." Considering the short period of five years, she feels they have been successful economically in "working our way up from nothing to owning a business, a mortgage house, enough food to eat, and two cars. Overall, we are doing okay but cannot be considered rich." In terms of the other major reason for migration, she is happy that her children are doing well in school. Her greatest hope is that the children will have a better future and they need not have to work so hard as the parents. She hopes they will be in a higher economic, social and education statuses. She considers her mission as:

building the foundation where hopefully, the children can see and appreciate what we did for them and they will study hard. Otherwise, our sacrifice will not be worthwhile if they don't make use of the opportunity. I hope and pray for the best future.

She also hopes the family can stay together and be happy which, to her is the most important thing in life.

Summary

Mrs. K, after staying home for the first two years in America looking after the family, decided to become economically active by opening a second-hand goods store. She feels that her socio-economic status has dropped one level. She feels that education is one means of moving up the socio-economic ladder and is committed to ensuring that her children received a solid education. However, she is also circumspect in that not every student can excel in school as her own family experience has shown. Hence, she is not pressurizing her children at all cost to excel in education but expects them to put in their best effort. She feels that boys and girls should be given the same opportunities for development. She did not receive a college education as a result of the government's race-based policy rather than gender discrimination on the part of her parent. Initially, she felt apprehensive being in America but owing to her flexibility, easy adaptability to a new culture and keen observation of the mores and practices of the way of life in America, she managed to adjust and accommodate her way of life to the American way. She feels that the "model minority" label can be good or bad depending on the performance of individual Chinese student in schools, the economy and society. She is ambivalent about the gains and losses in immigration to America. However, overall, she feels that there is a bright future for her children.

Interview with Father, Mr. K (Case 1)

Background

Mr. K was born on March 29, 1952 in an isolated, rural, rice-growing village situated on the outskirts of the state capital of Alor Star, Kedah. Kedah is one of the northernmost states of Peninsular Malaysia bordering southern Thailand. His wife was born in the state capital itself. He was born the eighth child to a large family of 10 siblings, evenly split between five boys and five girls. At present, there are six surviving siblings including Mr. K, as four of them, two males and two females have since passed away. The age range between Mr. K and his eldest sister is 18 years.

Mr. K's father migrated to Malaysia with his grand father when he was six years old from the southern province of Kwangtung in southern China. When they arrived in Malaysia they brought nothing with them from China as was the normal practice then of many Chinese immigrants which prompt many writers, researchers and politicians to describe the economically successful Chinese who had made it in Malaysia as coming "with a mat and nothing in their pocket." Mr. K's grandfather and father had to work in the rice fields for Malay landlords as a means of survival. Owing to the isolated nature of the village, many basic amenities of life were denied them like piped water, electricity, paved roads and decent housing. His village was "only accessible on bicycle and on foot." Mr. K's mother was born in Malaysia. She belonged to the Teowchew dialect group. Mr. K places his whole family in the poverty group or the "have-nots" in

Malaysia. Before immigrating to America, both his parents have since passed away.

Since his family lived in a very isolated village, educational facilities were extremely poor. He states that they were considered very fortunate to have a dilapidated, small Chinese elementary school situated several miles away from his house. His family, like other poor families, suffered the ravages of deprivations of life which, unfortunately included education. All his siblings were forced to leave school in their elementary grades to help supplement family income by engaging in any form of work that suited them or happened to come their way. His brothers had to look after buffaloes belonging to Malay landlords and his sisters had to help in performing family housework from a very young age. Mr. K was the lone, bright star of the family who stayed to complete his education, successfully passing the Higher School Certificate examination (preuniversity classes or A-Level). In subsequent years, he upgraded his professional status by passing the London Chartered Institute of Transport examinations through correspondence courses.

With the certificates awarded by London Chartered Institute of Transport, Mr. K became a Division I Officer in the government service attached to a Port Authority in Malaysia. Most of his sisters became full-time homemakers and the youngest sister worked part-time as an assistant food and beverage caterer for social gatherings. His first brother is an itinerant retail businessman working at flea markets selling groceries. His second brother is a farmer cum stall-holder selling his own produce as well as produce he collects from other farmers at the local wet market. His third brother was a carpenter working in the house-building industry who has since passed away. It is from his third brother that Mr.

K learned his skills at carpentry during his after-school hours to help supplement family income. Little did he realize at that time that the skills acquired would serve him well in America when he worked as a handyman. His father was a tenant farmer planting rice. In order to help supplement his family income, he started a very small sundry store, which in time became a source of indebtedness. His father was able to rent only one and a half acres of land on the basis of a share-cropping arrangement with Malay landlord.

At the time of migration, Mr. K held the highest position attained as an assistant traffic manager at a port harbor. He assessed himself to be in the middle income group in socio-economic status (SES) in Malaysia. However, in the United States, he experiences a down-grading of his SES and he considers himself to be in the upper lower income group. He defines SES as the actual earning power in terms of monthly income. He quotes as an example, an income of \$5,000 - \$10,000 per month would place one in the middle income group here.

When Mr. K immigrated to the United States in April, 1990, he was 38 years old. He arrived here with his wife and four children. He has three boys and a girl and in order of ages, they were 11 years, nine years, four years and three years old. The girl was the youngest child. They migrated on the basis of the Lottery Program, OP 1 provided by the United States government which entitles those selected to be permanent residents. His desire for migration was so strong that he even considered many other favorite destinations for Malaysian migration such as New Zealand and Australia. His main reason for migration is that he wanted "to hunt for better opportunity economically" for the sake of his children rather than for himself. In fact, being in a middle class

group, he and his family were living comfortably in Malaysia even with him as the sole breadwinner. They were able to enjoy many comforts of life like employing maid to work in the house, have a house of their own, cars, and vacations. His second most important reason is education for the children. He says, "In Malaysia, educational advancement is limited for the Chinese." As it is a small country with only seven universities, the chances are very slim for his children to be admitted, perhaps to a tune of only 5.0% of the total student populations. [There is a strict racial quota on college and university admissions imposed by the government; courses are allocated to students by university authorities and students have no right of choice to any particular course of study. As the bulk of highly qualified students are Chinese whose number far exceeds the quota set, many are denied opportunity to further their education in Malaysia on account of the color of their skin, though on merit, they are far more qualified than the Malays. Malay students are admitted in large numbers, even if they do not meet minimum qualifications.] The high cost of expenditure exceeds the capability for a middle income earner, like Mr. K to provide quality college education for his children overseas. As Mr. K has four children, he has to accumulate about one million dollars, not taking into account future inflation and increase in fees. [Based on current estimate of sending a student from Malaysia to UC Berkeley, the annual expenditure would be at least MR\$57,000 and for four years the total cost would be MR\$228,000.] The dilemma faced by Mr. K is, "Most of the people in Malaysia have to send their children overseas. I consider I have not enough money to send four kids overseas. It is impossible to send them. The only chance to get our dream is to migrate."

The third reason for his migration was that he had no confidence in Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) as a medium of instruction in Malaysian schools and colleges. [There is little economic value in Malay as a language which is not a language of science and technology, mathematics, medicine, trade and commerce and internationally, it is not known. Malay is a language used only in Malaysia and Indonesia, with a combined population of about 200 million people.] With this, he says, "You don't have a chance to go anywhere. Few countries value the language."

Fourth, the racist Constitution which conferred special privileges on the Malays affects the non-Malays adversely in all aspects of life, which at times become extremely unbearable and unjust. Mr. K says, "It is all politics and race—even if you study in Malay, they are not going to treat you equally." In addition to the disadvantage he suffers as a result of his skin color, he also feels that there is discrimination against the English-educated. He says, "We are educated in English. We find an iron curtain on our advancement." [There has always been an over-zealous implementation of all the racial policies that favor Malays and whoever is not proficient in Malay language is punished in terms of hiring, promotion and training.]

Fifth, he has heard from others that the situation in the United States is promising in the sense that one "can earn a good income guaranteed by minimum wage and also we are paid well." The most important factor was that he was told, "they do not discriminate." He felt that since he had a certificate from the London Chartered Institute of Transport and was willing to work hard, there would be greater opportunity for himself and the children.

At present, he is helping his wife in her second-hand goods store and on occasions, does handyman repair work for selective clients only. His job of a handyman encompasses making repairs for houses such as sewage, roofing, pipes, and windows. For the first few years, he worked full-time as a handyman. After his wife opened the second-hand goods store, he phased out his handyman business gradually. His four children are attending the local neighborhood schools. The first boy is in high school, the second in middle school while the two younger ones are in elementary school.

Educational Background

Mr. K's highest formal education is Form Six, which is a preuniversity class (equivalent to first year college in America). Mr. K encountered considerable odds in his education, some of which he managed to overcome while others are beyond his power of control. The obstacles Mr. K encountered were as follows: He suffered extreme deprivations in the form of monetary, psychological, educational and general environmental impoverishments. [There is a usual pattern of disadvantages for people living in depressed and underprivileged areas in Malaysia. Low performance in public examination is highly correlated with place of residence as a consequence of a combinations of factors such as low expenditure per school, demoralized and uncommitted teaching staff, student apathy towards education, poor physical and instructional facilities, and low expectations of both teachers and students.] Second, the system of public standardized examinations was very strict where a failing grade in either English or Mathematics or a certain group of subjects

would entail sitting the whole examination again the next year at Form Three (9th grade here) and Form Five (11th grade here) levels. The stringent rules resulted in a very high casualty rate for his classmates and schools. He was one of two successful candidates at Form Three examination in his school. His success was considered by him as a combination of luck and a "little innate intelligence" because he had no one to assist him in his academic work nor the money to pay for after-school tuition. In addition, he had to confront constraint of time as he had to work daily to supplement family income. He had to help in planting, tending and marketing of vegetables and rice. He relates how during his Form 4 year (10th grade), he had to borrow money to attend school and to buy only second-hand books. He repaid his debt during the school holidays when he had the opportunity to earn some money from working in the rice fields and at whatever odd jobs that were available in the village. During the two years in Form 6, he had to live in the capital city of Alor Star (the nearest place where pre-university classes are offered) to study and he was lucky to be able to stay with his third sister. To help defray living expenses, he had to collect and distribute laundry on his bicycle daily. This cut deeply into his time for revision and practice on academic exercises. It was considered a tremendous success for him to qualify for full certificate albeit without outstanding grades. He related how his economically better-off classmates were able to practise and complete all exercises in the texts while he had to spend his time working hard to earn just sufficient money to continue his education. However, due to the racial quota imposed by the government on admissions to university and the resultant fierce competition artificially created by this policy among the Chinese, he

realized he had no chance of admittance. Hence, he resolved to enter the labor market.

Immediately after the Form Six result was released, Mr. K worked as a temporary teacher in an elementary school for one and a half months while at the same time applying for a more permanent job. He was selected to work at one of the port harbors in Malaysia. This is where his professional training began. He was given on-site training for a month at the port authority's training school and was sent to Outward Bound School for leadership training for about a month. He worked in the capacity of a traffic officer, senior traffic officer and finally as an assistant traffic manager in the same service continuously for the past 16 years just before his migration. During the course of this long tenure, he was sent overseas in 1986 for a nine month training period in harbor and port management operations. That was the longest duration of professional skills upgrading training he had attended besides other numerous short-courses which lasted from a few days to a few weeks. He feels that his professional training is not recognized in the United States. However, his greatest achievement was passing the Royal Chartered Institute of Transport, London (RCIT) examination (advanced level) through correspondence. It was mandatory that to be confirmed in his post he had to pass at least the intermediate level, which he did successfully within three years. Subsequently, on his own initiative he continued to pursue the advanced level examination, thus enabling him to become a member of the RCIT. This is an honor degree course in transportation which qualified him to be placed on the Division I Category of the government civil service. As the RCIT is conducted all over the

world and of high standing, it is recognized here. Mr. K has attended interviews with the Los Angeles harbor authority using this degree.

While in America, he has enrolled at the West Los Angeles Junior College hoping to eventually qualify as an electronic engineer. However, after completing 12 units of the course, his interest faded due to the more pressing need for daily survival of the family and the difficulty to enroll for courses in the evening as a result of budget cuts. That was the end of his professional aspiration through formal educational institutions. He is now concentrating on his personal professional growth in business entrepreneurship by opening a second-hand goods store. This can fulfil his dual needs of meeting the immediate survival of his family as well as his acquisition of business knowledge.

He has no more educational plans for himself and prefers to leave academic pursuits to his children. Working as an employee for others is not an option for him. Considering if he works as a traffic officer in the harbor authority or as an employee for another person, he estimates he may be able to earn around \$3,000- \$4,000 per month after spending another three to four years' of study and further expenditure. At present, to work as a handyman full time, he can earn the same amount of income per month. His other option of concentrating fully on his second-hand goods store and work selectively as a handyman will earn him somewhat the same amount of income too. Hence, there is no incentive for further study. In addition, by concentrating on his business and getting in touch with the business community, he feels there is a world of opportunity "opened for me to explore."

Mr. K is trilingual, which is expected of a Chinese graduating from a Chinese elementary school. He is proficient in Mandarin, English and Malay. He is also fluent in his own dialect, Teowchew (Qiucao) and Fujian.

Both his parents did not have much education. However they learned to read Chinese was done purely on their own initiative through self-teaching and sometimes from some fortuitous circumstances. Mr. K was not sure about his father having a formal schooling as they never conversed on this topic. What he can recollect is that his father knew how to read classical Chinese poems and was able to recite "all the Chinese proverbs and idioms from memory." Mr. K remembers his father was "quite smart in using abacus and was able to make use of the traditional Chinese balance" in weighing goods for his customers. He was adept at mental calculations. Mr. K's mother was not educated at all being a victim of the traditional Chinese gender discriminations which can be summed up with his words, "In those days, you girls don't have to go to school. It is better for you to get married. Hence, they have no chance for formal education. The only informal education they had was to learn needlework and cooking."

He related the unique experience his mother had in learning how to read Chinese. She came to know an old man who was fond of smoking and he had to walk some distance everyday to buy his cigarettes. His mother volunteered to buy the cigarettes for him as he was quite infirmed. In those days, on every packet of cigarette was written a phrase, proverb or idiom in Chinese. When she returned with the packet of cigarettes, he would teach her how to read those words and would give her the cigarette packet. She accumulated the cigarette packets and at the same time, her knowledge of Mandarin. He says, "This is

how she picked up her Mandarin." Through this informal and unique learning strategy she managed to acquire a level of proficiency just sufficient to read and understand comic strips and some limited old Chinese poetry but not the formal texts. She did not know how to write. She knew only the rudimentaries of Mandarin but not the intricacies of the language.

With the limited amount of education they received, their attitude towards education was predictable and is summed up thus: "They don't emphasize too much on education. They only wanted me to know how to read and write. They are ignorant of education and do not know what uses it is for." He thinks that between the two parents, the mother was slightly more conscious of the importance of education and had some inkling that for a child to have some education would be useful. Although his brothers and sisters were considered bright in the village, they dropped out of school early due to the absence of importance placed on their education. The necessity to earn some income for the family and to help in the household chores were additional reasons for dropping out. All his siblings had to study on their own without any encouragement or guidance from their parents. All their academic activities and learning were confined within the four walls of the classroom and once they left the doorstep, it was the end of it. They had to work for others or at home. He related that when he was small he was not aware of the advantages of education. The self-realization came only later with the belief that "if one is educated, it will be easy to earn a living and the work will be easier." He laughs over the fact that he did not even know what a "distinction" meant nor what was the significance of a Grade One or Two or Grade A. His loftiest expectation in examination was just to obtain a "pass." This lack of knowledge about the value

of education, low expectation, aspiration and ignorance of the significance of good grades are due to familial circumstances:

We (the family) don't talk about education at all. We had very little contact with educated people in my neighborhood. The neighbors were not like the residents in town areas where they talk about what goal you have. I don't know what my goal was. Maybe, just to pass exam.

Mr. K says that whatever little he knew about education it was all through self-realization and fate. He conveyed his desire to continue his study in secondary school to his mother. Fortunately, his mother agreed on condition it was not a burden to the family, financially. [His future economic well-being, like other children from an impoverished group in a developing economy hung in the balance between continuing education or dropping-out of school to enter the labor market as a blue-collar worker which would consign him to remain in the low SES group. This was due to the rigid wage structure that correlated closely between education and income in Malaysia. Any student with a university degree from a low SES family would be propelled straight into a middle income group when employed.] As providence has it, he said that his "luck is better" otherwise, "if I don't have the chance, I will drop out." However, his endeavor towards a better living standard was difficult. He was left on his own ingenuity to study hard to pass public examinations and to work in the rice fields to save enough money to finance his own education. He knew that he had very little opportunity to further his education in college due to his poverty and the government racial quota on admission.

Although he did not receive any guidance, encouragement and high expectations from his parents, he does not blame them nor feel bitter. As to be

expected in an isolated village, his parents "communicate only with their own ignorant peers and they are old people." Environmental factors play an important role in shaping the aspirations of his parents for him as well as his own aspiration. "We don't have any friends who have children going to higher education in those time like becoming a doctor; there is no comparison--no model to look up to." Whatever knowledge his parents had about education was through their limited ability to cull from newspapers and when the Chinese elementary school was first built in his village, the parents perfunctionarily sent him there to study. To his parents, "to study a bit is enough." He understood that it would be "beyond their ability to send me for higher education." Whatever meager assistance he received for his educational career was from his mother who agreed to let him continue his education. This was only possible after some rare persuasion from his uncle and cousins who were town dwellers and were outstanding students in schools. Although there was some possibility of reaping benefits from his relatives as role model, it was not significant as they were separated by the geographical isolation and infrequent contacts.

While in school, his parents did not assist him with his school work due to first, they did not have the time and second, their limited knowledge of Mandarin. He draws a parallel example of himself now in assisting his children in their school work. He says, "Now we have no time. After working a whole day, we are already half-dead at night." His father spent all his time working or playing *mahjung*. He said his father did not encourage him to study, did not enquire about his education and sometimes, he "did not even sign my report card." The only people that could assist him in his school work were his brothers and sisters but they did not help much either as "I happen to know

everything that is taught. I learned from the teacher. There was not much problem." Since attending the first grade, Mr. K always stayed within the first three positions of his class and was rewarded with presents from the school. The acknowledgement he received from his parents, when informed of his rewards was, "They just say good! good! So they don't really encourage me to study." This hardly constitutes positive motivation or reinforcement for him. Mr. K's relationship with his father can best be put in his own words:

He has no aspiration for me and no philosophy towards education. He seldom discussed anything with us. He would just come back to eat together as a family and he would attend to his own business and we did our homework. I hardly conversed with my father.

When Mr. K was in secondary school, he looked up to his cousins for role model. He received some encouragement from friends and teachers who sometimes would ask them to go for further study. He regretted that his brothers and sisters were wasted talent as they had no guidance and money to further their education. His parents could not make any commitment toward his education because they "didn't give any to the elder son and how could they give to the younger one?" Hence, Mr. K did not benefit from any positive reinforcement, positive attitude towards education, high expectations or aspirations to "reach for the stars" from his parents.

Working Background

Mr. K worked as a temporary elementary school teacher for one and a half months immediately after his Form Six examination while waiting for the

result of his application to a port authority. He felt very embarrassed to leave the position half a month earlier as promised when he was offered the job at a port authority. He had no options as the teaching post was temporary and the latter had better prospect of being a permanent, full-time job. His entry level job was a traffic officer in 1975. He worked his way up the promotion ladder to a senior traffic officer and finally as an assistant traffic manager for the last three years before migrating to the United States. This job with the Harbor Authority lasted for 16 years. When he migrated to America, he experienced an immediate downgrading of his job to that of a handyman. He worked in this position full-time until three years ago. His time and efforts are now channelled towards his second-hand goods store.

He feels that his second-hand store business is better than the handyman's job as it offers him the opportunity of using more of his "mind than his physical strength." In his previous job, he had to do everything himself as he could not trust his helper to do a good job. His clients too preferred him since the quality of his job was much better than his assistants'. He feels the job demands too much of his physical strength and decides that it cannot be a long-term job as years go by. Sometimes, he suffers from physical exhaustion and pain. Hence, he decides to do something better that is "smart instead of something hard." He thinks that the present job can open up a wider array of business opportunities and believes that he can go far. He finds the present job "easy". He buys from auctions and special sales from big dealers and resells them. His earnings depend on how good a deal he gets from the auction. Hence, his margin of income varies according to the difference between buying

low and selling high. He says his business can sustain them a living but not on a level that can be considered "rich."

Mr. K is more satisfied as a businessman than as a handyman. His current aim is towards sustaining a living rather than towards reaping high profits.

Mr. K's interest in a career as an electronic engineer fizzled on realistic re-evaluation of his present status and the potential future earnings. He has decided that his days of studying for academic and professional qualifications are over and. He says, "It is not the way to go and it is too late to achieve them." He finds that if he were to work for a degree in three years' time, there is no way to support his family during this transition period. He questions, "If I go full-time in college, in the meantime, who wants to work for me to feed the children?" Although his interest for a professional engineering qualification was strong initially, he finds the "road seems to be blocked." As he has decided not to work for others, he wants now to "concentrate on his business and try whatever we can." He sums up his optimism and ethics for success in future in the following manner:

In business, there is a lot of opportunity. When you go into business, every opportunity can come and it's up to you to take it. You can work for how long you want to work. The reward is all yours. If you work for others, it's the boss'. When you work for yourself there is self-satisfaction when you get all the rewards for yourself.

Socio-economic Status

As previously stated, Mr. K considers himself to be in the upper lower SES now in America as compared to his middle class status in Malaysia based solely on his monthly income. Whether he would be able to raise his SES here would have to depend on the performance of his business. Of his business now, he says, "I won't say it is a glamorous business. When somebody hears it, it's a low-class business and is not going to make a lot of money. I'm making just enough to sustain my living." In terms of the monthly income it generates, it is more or less the same as the income earned from working full-time as a handyman. In terms of whether this business is of a higher social status than that of a handyman, he thinks it is not any higher "unless I venture into higher-priced antiques or just hang on until better opportunity comes." Mr. K's assessment of his future improvement in SES to be dependent partly on the opportunity and partly on his own willingness to work hard. He says, "We are in business now, we can also move on to a better ground in future because it depends on us whether we want to work hard. We can move from a second-hand store to antique business and enlarge our business area." He considers there are no constraints that can hamper his advancement to higher SES in America except his own personal limitations. He says, "Are you willing to work throughout the night and to plan for the next day or work only during the day and call it a night?" He quotes the position of some millionaire whom he says many people do not know "worked even at night forecasting and planning." He considers himself lazy as after dinner, he spends his time watching television and relaxing. [Actually Mr. K is manifesting the Chinese cultural trait of modesty

and he sets very high standards for himself. He works from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at times.] He says, "In USA, it is quite liberal for you to do what you like. They don't discriminate much in opening a business, or getting a licence." In comparison to the situation in Malaysia, establishing a business in America is comparatively easy when done through the proper channel. He believes firmly that even if one wants to venture into big business, the authorities would not prevent one from doing so. For his future plan to move up to a higher SES, he pins his hope on his children coming together in a cooperative effort. He believes that if everyone participates with, for instance, four or six sources of income, it would be easier to secure a bank loan for a business or buy a house. This is conditional on the children living together and mutually helping each other as a family. When this family cooperative spirit is inculcated in the children early, he says, "we don't see any problem to move to higher SES." [It is evident that Mr. K's pattern of thought is exemplifying the typical Chinese self-reliance through the pooling of incomes and resources by different members of the family which tend to mislead many unwary researchers to conclude that the Chinese household income is high without the corresponding analysis of the number of contributors. This is one of the many different methods of Chinese capital formation on a small scale.]

Mr. K does not participate in any community activities nor join any club or society. He has only one reason for this--he has no time as all his waking hours are used to generate income for the family. He says, "I don't even have time to look after myself." He wishes he could participate in some of the community activities.

Mr. K reveals that he has not many friends. Most of his friends are

Malaysians. He has a clientele of about 200 to 300 and from this group, some became good friends. His total number of friends can be said to be about 10 to 20. When he was working as a handyman, his clientele were mostly Whites, some Middle-east Americans and a sprinkling of Asians. He was kept tightly occupied daily with jobs through "word of mouth" advertisement and that if he wanted to, "I can even get jobs to do on Sunday." He says, "I never run out of jobs" right after the second week of his arrival in America working as a handyman. In reminiscing his experiences as a handyman, he specially mentions two White clientele as particularly generous and friendly in that one pays him 20% more than his asking price and another, twice the amount. This has impressed on him the generosity of the American public.

Attitude towards Education

Mr. K's attitude towards education is that there should be emphasis on the acquisition of academic skills as well as the wherewithal to help one in "everyday life like forecasting, thinking, ability to grasp everything that happens around you and to find solutions to problems. At the same time, if educated, you can see through the problem easily than those who are not educated." He further says, "From our experience, we know education is very important if you want to achieve a good life." He considers it important that "we have to put in extra effort to encourage our kids to study hard." He expects his children to go far in their education if they are intelligent, otherwise he will encourage them to attain whatever level they possibly can. He finds it his duty "as parents, to keep on encouraging them and not to limit them. My job is to encourage them to

study and get good grades." He is aware that the cost of obtaining a good education in this country is not high. He reiterates that education is not only confined to obtaining a good career but "is meant for life." Taking his own example as a handyman, he gives a simple instance of buying a part for the faucet. He explains,

If you cannot use the correct term, the hardware store-keeper will take half an hour to understand you. They couldn't help you . . . I consider myself to have a good education and when on the job, with all the things around me, for example, house leaks, faucet leaking, toilet not flushing, I can visualize.

Mr. K is cognizant of the fact that all his schooling days did not prepare him to do the job of a handyman. He considers himself still receiving an education in his daily work. He says, "I learn everyday--from my job, my client and people around me." He thinks that if one is educated, "you are an all-rounder and you know better than those without." Mr. K is instructing his children that they "mustn't only concentrate on your academics but also look at things around you and to help me with the work. I will explain to them what I do."

Malaysian and American Education Systems Compared

In comparing and contrasting the American system of education with that of Malaysia, he says the latter, first and foremost, is based on British system. He thinks that the American system is easier and have fewer levels. He says,

I don't really understand the American system. I just pick it up here and there from my kids . . . I consider myself quite ignorant. I don't research. I

concentrate on what they bring back in their reports. I should [find out more about the education system] but I've no time to talk to their teacher. American school system can retain students if they fail, whereas in Malaysia, there is a system of automatic promotion functioning side by side with termination if one is overaged as a result of failing the public standardized examinations at three grade levels, namely, ninth, 11th and 13th. The Malaysian system is age-hierarchical. Mr. K knew about this from his children who told him there are students who are two years older than them but are in the same class. He says, "Here, the students are given a lot of chances until you pass or you yourself get fed up and quit." Another difference he notices is that American schools offer numerous subjects and "when I read the report card, I don't really understand." In Malaysia, the number of courses are limited. The reports in American schools show only the grades and not the actual marks. In Malaysia, the report cards contain the actual marks, the average and grades. In America, the terms used in report writing are "satisfactory, fair, outstanding which I don't know at what level. I don't know what the kids' performance are really like. Here, by 'outstanding' I don't know where you stand." He finds that the scale used in GPA scores are more meaningful as he knows that the best score is 4.0.

He feels that the examination system here is more lenient compared to that of the British which requires one to pass certain groups of subjects, and if one fails any group, one has to sit for the whole examination, whereas in America, one need to repeat only those courses that one fails in.

The discipline in American schools does not appear to mete out any kind of punishments; in Malaysia, corporal punishment is used through the rattan

cane for failing grades in front of the whole school. [It is possible that during Mr. K's schooling years around the sixties and early seventies, caning for failing grades may be used, particularly in rural schools. However, the present system permits only caning under very serious disciplinary circumstances and that requires strict procedures to be followed to avoid unnecessary litigation. In fact, throughout the history of Malaysian education, there was only one litigation filed against the school for caning and that was politically motivated. The verdict was extremely mild. The general public's attitude is uncompromising towards indiscipline in school and they give unequivocal support to the education authorities to enforce such discipline.] Mr. K finds that the schools here use counseling which is a "good way but not very effective for small kids." He believes that it is too difficult for some children to comprehend the purpose of counseling.

Mr. K admits that he has not much knowledge of the teacher-student relationship as his wife is the one who usually goes to school and attends conferences. His knowledge is culled from his children and how well the relationship goes depends very much on the teachers--"whether they are kind, good, attentive and take personal care." He knows that some of the teachers are very loving, which contrasts greatly with those in Malaysia, where they "seem to be fierce." American teachers "laugh, and play with them." He considers this form of relationship as good but has reservation about the amount of knowledge being imparted. He feels that in terms of the amount of knowledge being taught, it is less here than in Malaysia. Usually, in Malaysia, students did their homework for somebody "we fear . . . you must do your homework, if not you suffer." However, in America, "the children love to go to school and they talk to

the teachers like friends." He finds the teacher-pupil relationship over here better than in Malaysia.

He does not notice much community-school activities during his stay in America. However, he does sometimes observe teachers bringing students on short walking trip to stores around the school to explain to the students. At one time, he noticed school children painted over graffiti on a wall which he considered an excellent activity since it taught children how to maintain cleanliness.

In terms educational quality, Mr. K is of the opinion that the American schools are well-equipped with modern technology like projectors, computers, and other modern facilities which are still lacking in Malaysian schools. They "don't even have transparencies." He finds American schools prepare students to meet future challenging situations which are changing at a very rapid rate, especially in the fields of science and technology. This is to "keep them abreast with the changes." American school children are given hands-on training in computers, other technological tools and advanced materials in the classroom. There are many free field trips in America and none in Malaysia. Whatever field trips are available in Malaysia, they are always paid "excursions."

In terms of teaching methodology, Mr. K finds that there are a lot of activities for the students to do but in Malaysia, it is very rigid. There is more time to study in American schools as it ends at about 3:00 in the afternoon whereas in Malaysia, school ends at about 1:00 in the afternoon. In Malaysia, there is a lot of homework given daily from Monday to Friday. There is no exemption for vacation or weekends. He says that in America, no homework is given on Friday and "they let you off completely for the weekends." Mr. K

agrees that students have to be at ease to study whereas in Malaysia, there is too much pressure where students have to study the whole day and in addition, attend after-school tuition.

Due to the absence of pressure from teachers to study hard, relatively small amount of homework, more time in school to complete class assignments and the overall relaxed system of education, he finds all his children take to schools very well. He says, "It is quite easy to study here. P.E is considered even as a subject-matter. There is some slight pressure during examinations, otherwise, they take it easy." Besides the relaxed atmosphere of study in school, Mr. K does not "press them too much" either. His children need not attend after-school tutoring and he does his responsibility of reminding them to study hard. Overall, he finds American education quite compatible with his children's educational needs. He does not know what to expect in future. He says, "I don't think things can change that easily; everything here has to go to the voters." The only thing that he notices has changed a lot is the retrenchment of some teacher-aides and reduction in the number of field trips due to financial cuts. He says the future of Californian education depends on the economy. The outlook for California does not look bright because of economic recession and the fear of future financial cuts from the education budget. He feels that if it "goes this way, then it will be no good." He is aware that Proposition 187 is inimical toward immigrants.

Compatibility of the American Education System to Children's Needs

His first two sons had some difficulties in their English during the first year of schooling. However, he finds they "take to the system very quickly and talk to their peers and friends" like American children in a relatively short period of time. The difficulty at initial adjustment in language is due to their speaking only Mandarin in schools in Malaysia. His children do not bring back any problems from school to have him solve. He says he took measures to ensure that they do not have problems in schools by observing how the school functions and attended conferences, especially the first and second semesters of their first arrival in 1990. He related that there was only one occasion where, after assessing a school he felt that it is "a bit racist in not wanting to entertain their concerns. I felt a bit discriminated." He added, "Sometimes, he feels that Blacks do not like Asians and if the children are good, they purposely pay little attention to them. So, the children are deprived." Based on his feelings ("don't have a good feeling") and suspicion, he transferred his son to another school. After the transfer, his son's grades improved and is now doing very well in school. Mr. K believes that a "different set of teachers and school can produce different standards. School and teachers are very important factors." He found that the school from which he transferred his son consists of students that are "not good" and the community from which they come are "not of the right mixture." He observed that his son began to use vulgar language and did "funny" things which he cannot recall but he knew that he should not have done the things he did. He particularly dislikes the way the son talked back to him, using inappropriate slang and a distinct way of walking. He realized that his

son has been picking this from his peers. His keen observation of the behaviors of his children is his best strategy of pre-empting any problems that may arise. He wants to nip the problem in the bud before anything further happens.

He uses a strategy of talking to his children and making them realize that there are certain things that they should and should not do. He used to warn his children against mixing with "bad" company like the skin heads and also against piercing their ears. He exercises some control over the type of friends they mix with. So far, all his children have been quite responsible and usually ask them for permission before they go out with friends. He has seen some responsible American children turned irresponsible due to a lack of family guidance or broken family. In sum, his coping strategy is, "prevention is better than cure."

He hopes that all his children will go to college after high school. He would not want to demand that they work in the house helping the mother nor to go to work part-time at McDonalds or other places earning minimum wages except during vacation. However, to Mr. K, their study comes first but "they are expected to help in the family and in the store" and that comes as second. He says, "I want them to have home education; to help each other and to train them to help around the house." He does not want to emphasize study as the only job for the children, otherwise they "will develop one type of attitude" and to take that as an excuse not to help the family. Regarding his children's desire to work to earn some pocket money, he says, "If the kids can get some temporary job during the vacation like working at McDonalds, it is okay as they can pick up some experience working." However, in the event they fail to get some

temporary job, it does not matter much as the most important thing for them is to get to college.

As for their future career, Mr. K does not specify which particular job they should pursue except to guide them. If it so happens that they choose a job that he considers "not good", he will "educate them." For instance, when his first son, Elwin expressed his desire to join the air force, he "reasoned and persuaded him out of it. Now he wants to go to NASA." Working with NASA is considered a more acceptable career. His second son shows some potential for doing business but the type of business venture is still uncertain; whatever it is, he is supportive of his son's choice. His two youngest children are too young to think of an academic or professional career. His guidance for his children includes discouraging them from mixing with bad company. He concludes that he does not have any plan for them but will "hint and talk" to them about what they want to do in future. So far, he notices that his first two sons have given some indications as to what they want to do in future.

Impact of American Values on Education

In discussing the impact of American values on Mr. K's traditional values, he related that he does not know much about mainstream American culture. The prominent American "outspokenness" conflicts with his values. His children sometimes speak to him bluntly. He expresses his dislike for his children to behave in such a manner. He feels that it is his duty to correct such behavior. The reason being that his cultural background does not agree with what is generally seen to be the practice in schools and the general public. Mr. K

relates that this is a very basic lesson on Confucianism where respect for elders are taught and passed down from one generation to the next. We "use what you learn from your father and mother." He confronts this by "explaining to the children we don't like it and ask them not to do it again." Usually his children refrain from doing it a second time. He says, "We have to tell them off. They will still respect you." Mr. K notices that American society does not "preach respect for elders." He reiterated that when the culture does not teach the children to respect elders, "it will hurt the elders' feelings" and the children will think that "they are more clever than the adults" but they do not know that, in fact, "adults are more experienced." In spite of a lack of respect shown to the American adults by their children, Mr. K believes the fundamental premise that "every American likes to be respected and they will like this Chinese mannerism too [respect for elders]."

His first strategy to cope with conflicting values is to let his children know that "we may not like you at all if you don't follow what we say." He indicates that there is a need to maintain the Chinese sense of moral value as to what is right and what is wrong. He gives a specific example--if the children were to follow the mannerisms of skin heads, he will "chase them out of the house." His second strategy, in the event of conflicts in cultural values is to have a counseling session among family members to resolve the conflicts first. He says that usually there is not much conflicts unless one of the parties is unreasonable. He is willing to allow a third party to step in to resolve the differences. If an impasse is met, then a close friend or other Malaysian friends will be enlisted to help talk to the children. He is sanguine that a third party's

opinion may be more easily acceptable as "when you are hot, you don't want to listen."

His third strategy may be the least complicated of all to avoid conflicts by preventing them through careful observations of his children's behavior. He says that generally, through observations of his children, he can sense what is coming. He will explain to them that how other American children behave in school should not be imitated at home if it is undesirable. He wants to make a distinction of "school is school and home is home." He will explain to them why he does not like their particular behavior and give his "reasons until such time when the children agree with us." He says by then, the problem will be solved. He says that so far, there has not been much conflicts in cultural values.

The second value that he finds conflicting and feels uncomfortable with is the American social norm of inviting a friend on the basis of a Dutch treat. His stand is that "if you invite someone, you are the host and should pay for your friends. But when invited, they just want your company but not to pay for you." However, he says that he is seldom invited by American friends except on only one or two occasions. This is because he has very few American friends. Furthermore, he does not have much communication with Americans and neither does he participate actively in mainstream American culture. [The Malaysian practice of invitation is that whoever does the invitation is the host and s/he will see to it that everything is catered for at the host's expense. The guests just have to present themselves and not to worry about payment.]

In terms of his and American culture being complementary, he does not see much of it except that he thinks that the American culture is progressive and the Chinese outlook is also similar. Probably another one is that Whites and

Chinese are hard-working. Mr. K concludes by saying that one has to be open-minded and "take the good ones and not the bad."

Reaction to Allegations for Some Minority Students' Failure

In discussing some allegations from minority parents that certain school practices cause minority students to do poorly in school, Mr. K thinks that racial prejudice "may be quite true in affecting the academic performance." He also feels that lacking in cultural awareness on the part of the teachers can be a small contributory cause for the academic failure of some minority students. However, he disagrees with the allegation regarding school regulations, the curriculum or gender bias as possible causes for the failure of some minorities. He finds that his children do not face any such problems as they are still young and can pick up easily what is being taught to them and their academic performance does not suffer as a result of them.

On the assertion by some minority parents that racial discriminations against hiring and promotion of minorities in the labor market caused some students to refuse to study hard in schools, Mr. K says he is still new in this country and does not know whether this allegation is correct or not. But if there is such accusation, then he thinks it would be baseless. He says, "If you don't want to study hard it is stupid and you have no capital to invest. Education is capital for the future and if I have good education, I have something to bargain and trade with you." He recounts that all these will come back to the question of attitude and that if parents "don't want to encourage their children to study, don't blame society unless you have good kids, good education and cannot get good

jobs." Unlike in Malaysia, the official policy is, "they don't care whether non-Malays have first class honors or not." However, he notices there are Blacks who hold high positions but he does not know whether there are other Chinese who hold similar high positions. But "considering our position, I don't expect every Chinese will hold high position."

On the question of racial discrimination, he thinks there are bound to be some but are not done openly as in Malaysia. He says that this could be "dangerous as we do not know how far they are doing it." From his observations for five years here, he concludes that Americans "don't talk openly about race and racial discrimination." He says he can feel that some "Whites don't want you to be in their company and they will only recommend their friends. Usually, high posts are also held by Whites."

Bilingual Education

Mr. K thinks that bilingual education in America is the "picking-up" of another language. As Mr. K's children attended schools in the area where the majority residents are Hispanics, he associates bilingual education with the teaching of Spanish. He is aware that Spanish is used widely in meetings and public announcements. He feels that there should not be too much emphasis put on bilingual education as eventually everyone has to learn English and to pass the examination in English. If Chinese bilingual education is available, he would like to send his children to study in order to maintain the Chinese language and culture. His reasons being that it would prevent the children from being too Americanized and also through Chinese language, it would help the

children to learn and be educated and lastly, it would be easier for him to teach and help them.

Gender Issues

Traditional Chinese parents are likely to prefer male over female offsprings. This preference, according to Mr. K has been quite evident in Malaysian where "some couples, when they produce a lot of girls, (up to ten consecutively) keep on trying until they get a boy." The reason he believes is due to tradition where males only can carry down the genealogy through inheritance of the last name. He believes that older generation is more likely to "stick" to such practice as compared to younger generation where other modern-day demands of life such as housing, education and economy may discourage such practice. To the older generation, especially grandparents, surname (last name) is very important to them as it represents the family name. Unlike males, when daughters married out, they assume the family name of her husband and it is the "end" of the family lineage. He thinks modern-day couples will stop giving birth between two to four children, regardless of sex. Mr. K's personal stand on gender reference for male offsprings is: "I'm quite old-fashioned. I'm a little bit inclined towards the traditional belief. I feel there is some kind of satisfaction when you are gone, otherwise, your work is not complete [if there is no male heir]." However, in spite of his preference for boys, he expresses rather philosophically that whether one is going to have boys or girls, "all boils down to fate. If one has to face the eventuality of the end of one's

lineage, one just has no choice about it." He thinks it is better to have a small rather than a big family.

Although Mr. K's first three children are boys, he did attempt to get a girl but gave up after trying for some time. He states that his only girl was unplanned which he described as an "accident." In traditional and Mr. K's own belief, having three boys is preferred to having three girls. Mr. K elaborates that if viewed from modern-day living, "girls are more lovable than boys and they will come to visit you when you are old." On the other hand, boys will visit their in-laws. He concludes that it is difficult to say whether having girls is better but it is certain that they tend to "love parents more than boys do." In practice, he has heard that such preference of male over female offsprings can lead to ill-treatment of daughters-in-law by parents-in-law for failure to beget grandsons. For his family, all his siblings and relatives did not mistreat the females. As for his immediate family, he treats his sons and daughter fairly although there is a tendency for the only girl in a family of boys to be treated special. He fears that if he treats his daughter special, she might develop undesirable attitudes and act spoilt. He states that he is stricter with his first son so that he can be a model for the others to imitate. How parents treat their children depend on how they behave toward each other as he realizes that there are some children who "know how to win your heart and sweet-talk you." He finds it rather easy to pinpoint which child is more hard-working, selfish, pampered, or bad-tempered and he attributes this to inborn qualities. He feels that parents can influence the development of their children's character to a certain extent.

There is a preference of males over females in certain categories of jobs such as those that require great physical strength, for example, work in iron and

steel mills. Usually, these kinds of jobs do not attract females. In leadership role, he finds that males are preferred over females as the former can command subordinates more effectively than females. It can be seen generally, that heads of department all over the world are mostly occupied by males. However, he notices also there is a gradual shift of females to non-traditional jobs. He believes that intellectually, males and females are equally capable.

Comparison of Gender Issues in Malaysia and America

In comparing the treatment of the female gender in Malaysia to that in America, it appears to Mr. K that there is no sex discrimination here due to the fact that it is liable to legal proceedings. At least there is no sex discrimination happening openly and "everybody is given equal opportunity to look for a job." It is evident in America too that there are a lot of "female employees who have taken over jobs mostly held by males" in occupations such as truck and bus drivers. He says, "In Malaysia, we could hardly see any bus driver, not to mention truck drivers." He notices that those female employees who hold non-traditional jobs are equally capable of handling them in America. However, where jobs that require tremendous "masculine energy, females are still unable to take over although given equal opportunity." Furthermore, these jobs would not attract female job seekers. Where office work are concerned, females are given opportunity, even as heads of department. This happens more in America than in Malaysia. In terms of education, "females were discriminated not long ago in Malaysia but not now as parents realize that females can help to

contribute to the household economy." The parents too do not want to see their daughters suffer as a result of being denied higher education.

Although females like to do cooking and other household chores, Mr. K thinks that they should not be the only ones to shoulder these responsibilities. Although the females perform these roles, no one can say, "by right, cooking is your job." He feels that males should share this job. For his family, his wife does the cooking and "everybody enjoys the food and she is happy." He is confident that his daughter will emulate his wife. She will learn how to cook and take care of family as a matter of skill acquisition rather than, on account of her sex. He says, "We would like her to learn how to cook and do laundry and her husband will be happy." He feels that these life skills are important for her acquire and she should not "expect people to serve her all the time." Mr. K alludes that females in his family take responsibility for certain household tasks on the basis of family division of labor, and as they are more gentle, they can do light work such as decorating, cleaning and sewing while boys are assigned household chores that require more physical strength. His sons were also given household chores to perform such as washing dishes. He concludes that chores in his house are not dictated solely by gender.

Mr. K believes that girls should be allowed to pursue academic education to as high a level as possible even up to Masters or Ph.D. levels "as long as they have the ability and financial affordability." Otherwise, if any one of the two conditions are not fulfilled, his daughter's education will have to stop some where. Where further education is concerned, his main criterion is ability rather than gender. For Mr. K, education is an investment and we "have to be wise in our investment, that is, to invest in the most promising child."

In Malaysia, he feels that if a girl is highly educated, it might be difficult for her to get a boyfriend with equivalent standards, otherwise, they might be incompatible. He finds that some female college graduates in Malaysia face difficulties in getting partners because males who have lower academic qualifications shied away. This depends on their upbringing as "boys do not like to lose to girls and won't feel happy." In Malaysia, children concentrate on their education in schools and colleges and they do not have time to attend social gatherings. Hence, opportunities to meet with boys are limited. [In Malaysia, one could hardly find school girls who are teenage mothers. The general expectations of most parents are that education comes before sex, love and marriage. Education is a full-time commitment.] Mr. K thinks that the situation of unequal achievements between the sexes is insignificant in the United States because American people tend not to "look down on others." He finds many cases of highly educated American females marrying less educated males. He wonders how American husbands feel--whether there is any feeling of inferiority complex.

Mr. K finds that traditional and non-traditional occupations are opened to both sexes. He says, "It is up to you to grab. If you think you can do it, go for it. The job market is open to everyone to venture." In conclusion, Mr. K feels that females should enjoy equal rights as the male.

Adjustments to American Society/Culture

Mr. K perceives a number of instances where the ways of life in the United States are different from those in Malaysia. He says that at times he

does not understand and does not know much about the American culture because he does not come into close contact with many Americans.

American and Chinese Culture Compared

Based on his limited contacts, he finds the first major difference in personal and social behavioral patterns where Americans "like to keep everything to themselves." They do not prefer to mix too much with other races. There is great importance placed on going by the rules and conventions. He says, "One thing I learn is everything one wishes to do one has to make appointments--to go to party or even to a close friend's house. One has to call first." In Malaysia, one can "just pop in. It doesn't matter whether the friend is taking a bath or not." Second, he notices that whenever one goes to a party, one has to bring presents. Third, in the relationship between parent and adolescent, the latter is treated as another individual. This relationship when translated into practice brings out the following examples: for an elderly parent who lives in her/his children's house, s/he has to pay rent to the children; a parent has to pay the son to do housework; children have to make appointment to visit their parents and when organizing a party, children have to invite the parents, otherwise they will not attend. He feels this is too formal but may be good as parents won't disrupt the party with their unexpected presence. He says this is something "we [the Chinese] don't accept." Fourthly, Americans "like to receive a lot of praises and self-praise is also very common." In short, they like "appreciation and to feel good." This, he notices is very much lacking in Malaysia. He says that it is better to be appreciative and complement each

other. Fifth, people seldom address each other as "Mister" and they expect to be called by their first names.

Mr. K's initial reactions when he first set foot on American soil was:
We feel like aliens. We are different in color, speech, thinking, and behavior. We are like a pieces of square pegs in a round holes. I feel that I am going to a mystery land. Everything is uncertain . . . I don't know how the country looks like and what people you will meet.

Coping with Differences

The uncertainties caused him to feel "a bit scared." However, as he has already decided to migrate, he has to "face it and let nature takes its course." As a consequence, he feels he has to adapt as quickly as possible. His coping strategy is to learn and follow what the neighbors and friends advise him. He is grateful that they offered him a lot of tips. He recollects some of the social conventions are to call first before visiting a house; to knock on the door before entering; to resist from offering food to neighbors as they may not like it; to desist from talking loudly or shouting after midnight and to refrain from going out at night for one may be shot. Mr. K feels that his transition was greatly helped by a Malaysian friend's sister who herself has just migrated five months ahead of them. She was kind enough to rent for them the apartment and bought couches and beds on their behalf. When coming to paying in Malaysian dollars for the first time, (the exchange rate was about one and a half times in favor of American dollars), he says, "I feel scared when paying out so much Malaysian dollars. I don't know whether we will survive or not." The first thing he recalls

was to go to "sleep straight away" on arrival. After a good rest and when his wife started cooking they "feel happy." In retrospect, he says, "It's a new challenge and it is worth it; it is very exciting."

Mr. K's next coping strategy was to "just follow what the Americans do. Avoid offending them. We just work and be more well-mannered. We tend to work humbly and address people politely. People seem to like us and they are happy with our English."

Mr. K says he has been learning for the past five years American behaviors and he pays particular attention to what they do not like. Through this strategy, he finds there is no reason for any conflict with the mainstream culture. As far as the danger of cultural conflict is concerned, he says, "So far, so good as we have adapted to it quickly." The most important strategy he employs is to observe what goes on around him and so far, things "happen to be smooth." His working contacts are mostly with Whites, some Arab Americans and few Asians. He was taught how to assess a safe neighborhood--by checking first for areas with low crime rate and second, by looking at the houses to see whether they are fortified with iron grills or have broken glass windows.

Mr. K observes that all his children are coping well with the new environment and they do not bring home complaints about schools or their peers. Furthermore, the children are doing well in schools. To ensure that his children do not get entangled with bad students, he kept them at home after school for the first few years. He is extremely cautious with random shooting and took great precautions not to let his children "mix too much" and to constantly talk to them. Mr. K states that he is going through a period of adapting to American society and culture together with his children.

He says he has not adjusted completely to the manner his children go to schools. His wife used to walk daily with their children to school and they were worried for their safety when crossing roads at traffic lights. However, he notices many American six-year-olds were walking to school unaccompanied by adults. Being very concerned, they refused to allow their children walk on their own. They preferred to accompany their children to school for the first few years. Even now, when time and circumstances permit, they will accompany their children. Otherwise, they will let them walk on their own like other American children.

When his children experienced culture clash or prejudice, what would he like them to respond? Mr. K says his children are not really knowledgeable about Chinese culture. This is because they came at an early age and he "wants them to get more acculturated to local cultures." However, he will discharge his responsibilities as a parent by continuing "to teach and to ask them to practise the good part of Chinese culture so that they know and not forget it." He does not foresee any possibility of a cultural clash between Chinese and American cultures as all his children "mingle well with American children." As a precautionary measure, he "will be at the back to guide them against certain aspects of American culture like free sex and hugging."

He hypothesizes that if there is a cultural clash, he would advise his children to be patient and try to avoid conflict. One coping strategy he hopes his children will adopt is to explain the Chinese culture to their American counterparts and to "make them aware of our culture and why we have it." He feels that his children need not follow the American culture if they do not want to unless when they marry Americans, then, there might be a culture clash.

His strategy to avoid any unwanted consequences is to "show them the problems of inter-racial marriage. For example, the problems of food, participation in social functions and disruption in family unity." However, his strategy does not include forcing his children to follow what he wants as that might "spoil our relationship." The best strategy to avoid any of these complications is to discourage inter-racial marriage. On the question of his children's marriage, he is cognizant of the fact that they will be living with their spouses and not with him. His opinion of American marriage is that it is short-lived and "according to American culture, if you live with a wife for more than five years, it is very good already." He is sanguine that if his children fall in love with Americans, he may reluctantly accept it because "he has no say." On the other hand, "There will be a guarantee that if they marry a Chinese spouse, the chances of following Chinese culture will be there." Even if his children marry Americans, he expresses his hopes that there is "still opportunity for them to convince the other party to follow our cultural track." Mr. K is aware of his right to practise his culture as long as the practice does not become a public nuisance. He quotes, for instance, lion dance and if the practice is too noisy, it that may cause distress to neighbors. He feels that he has to be considerate by avoiding the dance in public and to confine it inside the house so as to reduce the noise level but not to suppress the practice.

Positive and Negative Aspects of American Culture

There are certain aspects of the American culture that Mr. K finds enriching and feels that Chinese should emulate. One of these, which he

considers as the best, is that Americans are "straight-forward people." He appreciates that "what they don't like, they will say it straight away. There is no beating around the bush or keeping in the heart." This human quality is particularly welcomed by him as he can get immediate feedback on the performance of his work as a handyman.

The second American cultural trait he feels is worthy of emulation is the concept of punctuality. He says, "They keep the time and when they make appointments they definitely will be there and will call back if they cannot make it."

The third cultural trait is directly related to his work. He finds Americans "don't bargain too much--they don't like to bargain." His experience with American clients are that if a price is fixed for a particular job, they will either approve it or will ask for some time to think about it which means the chances of rejection is high. Even when they find the price is too expensive and are not happy with it, "they are not so blunt but quite well-mannered" in asking for some time to consider. He says, "They will not cut you down or insult you." So far, he has not experienced any nasty Americans yet who do not keep their promise, are not punctual or forget about their appointments. His pleasant experiences are with European Americans and he described them as "so trusting, never supervise and left the house entirely for me to work. They are gentlemen." Sometimes this trusting attitude is a source of worry for him as the house owner leaves jewelry and money around the house and he does not want other subsequent workers whom the house owner may employ to dishonestly pilfer them. He fears that this may leave a bad impression and unnecessary suspicions about his honesty and reliability. To overcome this anxiety he

always requests the house-owner to check their valuables or cash before he leaves. Another strategy is to tell them directly that some valuables are left around the house. He considers his worst clients are Middle-eastern people such as Egyptians and Jews as well as Chinese. He finds them very calculating and stingy. There are Chinese who would ask him to do extra work not previously agreed upon without any extra compensation. In addition, they are too critical and supervise closely to ensure that they "get their money's worth out of you." Besides this, some of his bad clients will sometimes delay payment by declaring that "they only write checks on a certain date." However, for the Whites, he considers them as very good pay-masters. He says, "They will pay on the spot."

The fourth cultural trait he finds in the European Americans worthy of emulation is: "they seem to be helpful and are willing to help if asked. Even if they could not help, they will try to give advice. "

On the other hand, there are certain American cultural traits he has some problem with. The first one is that they are "too easy with sex." The second one is the practice of hugging, especially between the opposite sexes. The third, is American parents allowing their adolescent children live on their own without their supervision. He thinks this contributes to family not "staying united." The last cultural trait is in the consumption pattern of American people, which is distinctively different from the Chinese, where they like "to live on credit." He says jokingly, "If you live on credit, you are considered creditable--the more the better." [To the Chinese, to be a debtor is undesirable and if a debt is owed, it has to be repaid as far as possible before the beginning of a Chinese New Year.]

Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese Culture

On the other hand, the Chinese cultural traits that he thinks should be retained in America are the following. First, the habit of working hard. Second, the value of determination--"never, never to give up." Third, the quality of a "dare-devil", that is, the daring spirit to face challenges. Fourth, the enterprising spirit in risk-taking by oneself like going into business and being not dependent on welfare or other people. He describes this as the value of self-reliance. Fifth, Chinese usually "think very far ahead." There is planning and sacrificing for the future as against immediate gratification. Sixth, he thinks Chinese are quite economical (thrifty) and save for the future. Seventh, Chinese parents always teach "our children to emulate our good examples" so as to have a bright future. Last, the Chinese family stays united with the parents maintaining stable marriages until old age. Normally, the disunity or any irreconcilable differences in the family is not evident through "divorce or if there are fights and bad things in the family, it is kept to ourselves."

The Chinese characteristics that he feels should be discarded are selfishness and disunity among Chinese. Regarding selfishness, he finds that Chinese "care too much for ourselves and are stingy." The Chinese do not stay united, especially in politics. He says, "They tend to concentrate in family circles and don't go to associations." The fact that memberships in social organizations are low may be due primarily, to the small number of Chinese and also to the residential pattern of the Chinese population which tends to be dispersed sparsely over the state.

Generational Conflict

So far he reveals there have been no instances of generational conflict with his children, especially with his eldest son. According to Chinese family traditions, "parents have the final say." However, he feels that as the children grow up and in subsequent generations, "we may lose this privilege." He regards this period as the transition in which Chinese parents will gradually lose their parental control over their children as they became acculturated to the American way of life. He would regard "as good enough" when the children agree with his opinion. He would relinquish, whether willingly or unwillingly, his "right of final say in family matters" when his children attain adulthood and are independent to decide for themselves.

He notices a distinct difference in the child-rearing practices between the two cultures in that "American parents, by the time their children are 18 years old, they ask them to get lost." He thinks that generally, the "American parents have no control over their children."

In order to avoid conflicts, he uses the strategy to keep a sharp look-out of the behavior of his children and to observe very carefully what they are doing, for example, such as going out at night. We "have to inform and explain to them the danger of getting shot." His advice for his children to cope with problems in school was "not to confront the other students nor to argue with them but to just walk away." Another avenue would be to inform the teacher.

Racial Discrimination

[Mr. K comes from a country where racial discrimination is enshrined in the Constitution and the practice is a virtue from the perspectives of the Malays. Mr. K and his wife were, like all non-Malays, victims of this invidious discrimination. Any opposition or criticisms to such racial discrimination is forcefully suppressed by imprisonment without trial.] In Mr. K's opinion, the principal arena of racial discrimination in Malaysia is in education which is used as a pivotal weapon to bring about the advancement of the Malays and at the same time retards the growth of non-Malays. The government's modus operandi is to implement racial discrimination in educational programs surreptitiously in a "slow and steady way." Through systematic racial policies, the government aims to "bring down the economy of the Chinese." Without an educated non-Malay populace, the chances of producing capable entrepreneurs will be affected and coupled with both a lack of big capital and strong backing to establish giant international corporations, the non-Malays' economic progress will be checked. Hence, there is a sinister plan to curtail educational opportunities for the Chinese. [Curtailment of educational opportunities may take the following forms: establishment of racial quotas in admission policies; unequal funding of educational institutions; exclusion of educational programs to non-Malays; hiring and promotions of educational personnel; training of personnel and many more.]

In the field of business, Mr. K observes the government "limits the business opportunity through the control of licences to non-Malays." In big corporations, licences for non-Malays are restricted by "imposing difficult

conditions like having more Malay participation as a precondition for approval." Furthermore, the government established public trusts exclusively for Malays with taxes from all the different races in Malaysia. The government's rationale for such racial policies is that "Malays are underprivileged all the time hence, it is justified to deny chances for non-Malays."

Mr. K is particularly incensed by the opportunities denied to non-Malays in general, and to him in particular, as he has lived a life of poverty throughout his younger days. He says,

I believe that every person lives only once and if a decade-long policy is implemented, you are denying a lot of young Chinese the opportunity of progress during their most productive age. For instance, if a person at 25 years is denied opportunity for ten years and by the time he reaches 35 years, they have no chance of striking big at all. The government keeps on expanding the NEP (New Economic Policy) from ten to twenty then to thirty years.

In employment, particularly notorious in government department, strict quotas are implemented, and for a non-Malay to be promoted, s/he has to be "very, very good" and you can only compete with "my Chinese colleagues" [not with the Malays]. "For example, if there are 10 promotional posts, eight will be allocated to the Malays and one for the Chinese and one for the Indians." [If a criterion of proportionality to population were to be used, Malays will constitute approximately, 55.0%, Chinese 35.0%, Indians 10.0%]. Overseas academic and professional training are limited to non-Malays. In terms of culture, whenever "national troupe participates in ASEAN (Association of South-east

Asian Nations) national dance, only Malay dances and cultures can represent Malaysia."

Mr. K feels that there are some forms of racial discrimination in the United States too but so far he "personally did not suffer from them." He says that he does not have to depend on anybody unless he works in a government department when he has to content with discrimination. He has been told and has read from newspapers that there are racial discriminations being practised here. He says that "top guns are White. In promotion there is discrimination too but not done openly." There is always open declaration of Equal Opportunity but if "they don't like you, they don't reply" to your applications for employment. "This can be very bad too as you do not know whether you were discriminated against race."

Racial discriminations in Malaysia have been entrenched since 1957 and as a non-Malay, one

"cannot do anything. . . there are so many discriminations that we cannot feel or change the course anymore. They can cry only in their heart and dare not say it loud because of ISA [Internal Security Act empowers the government to incarcerate anyone without recourse to any legal remedy]--lockup."

Mr. K expresses the helplessness and portrays the despair of many non-Malays in Malaysia. The coping strategy typically employed by non-Malays was to:

just face it and learn to be self-independent and work hard to prepare for the future. What more can we do? Just make use of every opportunity we have. We have to study hard, work hard to get the approval of our

boss. We compete against our own people to get promotion. The next thing is to find opportunities overseas; trying to escape."

Mr. K states that the policy of racial privileges started long ago and had been ingrained in the society. [The system of special privileges for Malays was agreed to by the three principal races in Malaysia during negotiations for independence with Great Britain in 1957, to allow Malays to enjoy special privileges for a period of 15 years. However, with subsequent amendments to the Constitution, it is for eternity.] With the onslaught of such "legal" sanctions of racial discriminations and the restrictions of democratic rights through retrospective legislation, Mr. K expresses his sentiments thus:

I feel very sad and disheartened. I feel there is no more future for you no matter how good you are. We still love the country and our relatives.

You don't want to leave unless it is so bad. I still love the place because of half of my life time of memories. They are still fresh. I long for the climate, culture, the surroundings, the sceneries and the beautiful places.

The most important is your memories . . . memories are beautiful.

Mr. K feels that as long as he lives, he likes to indulge in his reveries of long-lost fun activities of swimming and catching fish. He feels that if he were in Malaysia, he could "always go back to my home-town and village once in a while but over here, it has to be five years once." He feels he has "lost a lot."

While in America, Mr. K feels there is not much he can do to help reduce discrimination as "we are a minority and what can we do?" He feels it is the majority that discriminates. Personally, he can help defuse the discriminatory atmosphere by refraining from "saying something that discriminates or inflicts

bad feelings." His advice is "not to act in a manner that discriminate racially." Whatever one utters, one has to be careful as it might "build up in people's mind" misunderstandings and suspicions. He feels that it is very easy to practise discrimination, for instance, if one "talks bad about the Blacks and good about the Whites, is discriminations already." Such discriminatory talk can be made use of by others who will "capitalize on it and cause a movement" to create racial strife. He wonders how racial discriminations began in Malaysia.

Some people allege that in order to succeed in American society, one has to abandon one's culture. Mr. K's position is that "it is not necessary to forget my culture because I can succeed in American society. This is because this is a free country. You can do what you like." He finds that for his children to succeed in school, they do not have to forgo their Chinese language. In fact, "the teachers always encourage my kids to learn his own language and treasure your culture." He says that during the moon-cake festivals, he makes lantern for his children to play during the night and his American neighbors' children joined them to have fun and he makes extra lanterns for them. He explains to his neighbors the significance of Chinese festivals. He says, "We upkeep our good culture and throw away the bad. We encourage and explain to Americans who don't know our culture." He feels that Chinese need not abandon their culture totally to succeed in American society adding, "We cannot forget our culture." He considers culture to be the most essential part of one's existence and it is meaningless to try to deny. "Roots are your firm ground. You will never change your color; Americans will look at you as a Chinese." In America, he feels the society is magnanimous enough to accommodate the

existence of a great variety of languages and cultures and he reiterates, "Remember, we can study Chinese here up to whatever level."

Gains and Losses from Migration

Mr. K, in deciding to migrate to America finds that there are certain aspects of life he and his family have gained tremendously and certain aspects that they felt they have lost. He finds certain things that are "a world of difference" from that in Malaysia, particularly those that pertain to individual rights and liberty. He feels that when one has the freedom to say what one wants, it "makes you happy." However, in Malaysia, the Internal Security Act proscribes any form of protest pertaining to race that the non-Malays find unfair. This resulted in the lack of democratic freedom to think. He says:

This country has a lot of freedom of thought, speech and action. I can think what I want, to do what I want and to talk anything I want to talk. I can do whatever I like. I can also go to further my education. There is no age limit.

In terms of educational opportunity, he feels there are plenty and young and old can avail have any educational aspiration. He feels that if one cannot go to a four-year college, there are the junior colleges where one "can get recognition in AA degree or transfer to four-year universities." In addition there are also unlimited business opportunities.

The most important loss he and his family suffer is the loss of health benefits. He says, "We don't even have a chance to visit the doctor." [In Malaysia, as a government officer, all the health expenses are paid by the

government. Malaysia's health coverage is similar to that of the Canadian system.] Not all his vehicles are insured at the same time. He has a car, a van and a truck. He finds great difficulties in meeting the insurance expenses. Whatever is earned, about half of all his income goes to meet rental or mortgage payment for the store and residential house.

His second loss of any significance is the social activities that he has foregone. He says he has not many friends in America and the number of good friends are also limited. He feels apprehensive about making American friends as he does not know them and it is difficult to cultivate good relationship from fresh. In contrast, he used to meet a lot of strangers, acquaintances, friends and relatives in Malaysia when he attended social, marriage or funeral gatherings. This gave him opportunity to exchange ideas with them.

The third loss is the contact with family members where he can only visit them once, perhaps in five years. In Malaysia, he was able to meet them every month to "chit-chat" and to meet his uncles and aunts. He feels he is "here all alone--one family by ourselves except a few Malaysian friends."

Model Minority

The Chinese have been labelled as one of the model minorities in the US. When asked what he thinks this mean, he says, "It means you are considered as a model for other minorities. Chinese seem to be the best minority in educational achievements, financially and not too much, culturally." He feels that educationally, the kids are doing very well in schools and colleges where this fact was published in the newspapers listing the top scorers as

Chinese students. He feels that he does not have indepth knowledge about the meaning of the term nor of the implications of the designation. He states that he did not come across the "actual term, model minority." However, in considering the demographics of America, "we are a small minority and what we have achieved can catch their attention." He feels that it is the truth that the Chinese are a model minority but he does not think that this labelling is used to shame other minorities in any significant way. He thinks that the model minority label "is of no use unless the Chinese become more politically involved like holding public offices or a mayor. Then nobody can benefit from this model minority." Mr. K is thus aware, that as labels go, it does not serve any useful purposes unless it can be translated into practical, everyday, meaningful consequences for the betterment of the Chinese conditions of life.

Reasons Chinese Students are Excelling in Schools

When asked for the reasons that he believes contribute to the success of the Chinese in general and the Chinese students in the schools and colleges, Mr. K says that the most important factor is home education where the parents participate in the teaching of the children by ensuring they complete their homework, check on their school work and on the children's welfare generally. There should be good parental guidance and the parents should be strict with the children. The second factor is to seek out the best school. The third factor Mr. K emphasizes is the building of character -- the children must have self-respect and determination. He reasons that if "one wants to be respected, one has to show to the others one's capability." He believes that children should

inculcate the spirit of determination, persistence and courage. He says, "Children should be taught not to be scared of failure and obstacles. Don't take things lightly like the attitude 'we cannot do it, we forget it.'" He reasons that for new immigrants, it is easier to achieve one's goal because of the freedom of choice. Furthermore, based on his experience coming from a "restricted" country, there is a renewed sense of hope and we should make full use of the opportunity as "we have the shackles removed and we can run." Consequently, we "tend to work harder to excel and achieve something in life." The fourth factor is that Chinese students work harder because they realized that they come from backgrounds characterized by deprivations and when given the chance we "slog and work hard." The fifth factor is that he feels the Chinese possess comparable intelligence to the whites. This feeling is based on his observations of the performance and capabilities of other races. From his own estimation, he is confident that he needs to only take half as much time to do twice as well as what the others are doing. He concludes, "We are more capable."

Mr. K feels that Chinese can experience failure because of the lack of political strength and bargaining power. He refers to the question of the number game in demographics and politics. He cites as an example, the powerlessness of the Chinese to demand more places in colleges and universities based on merit or for more courses in Chinese. The second possible factor for failure is the inability to adapt immediately to the new system. He opines that if one is young, the process of adaptations would be faster, but if one, at the time of migration is older, will learn at a slower pace. The most important key to learning is the mastering of English and if one cannot master it

quickly enough, then, it is difficult to follow the courses and results in one doing poorly. The third factor is the speed of adaptation to the new culture and environment which he describes as "missing out because of the local culture, slangs, and for the kids, if they are shy to ask questions because of the handicap in language." The kids will experience failure if they do not ask questions unless they have "good connections" and assistance from other friends.

Impact of the Model Minority Status

Mr. K feels that the model minority label might affect those Chinese who come from mainland China whose handicap in the English language will prevent them from excelling. He feels that they should not "feel bad and with the habit of hard work, they will find ways." He suggests that there are night classes and tuition for them to attend. He hypothesizes that the worst that can happen is to become a dropout from school but that he feels should not be the end of everything; it could be the beginning of something new like starting a small business. He feels that the academic path is not the only path to success, taking himself as an example, he says, "I have given up academically and go into business although I can do well in my studies." He feels that studying hard to gain academic qualifications involves an opportunity cost and judging from the present recession the American economy is in, he would not be able to survive with an entry level salary of \$2,000 to \$3,000 after two to four years of hard struggle with college work. He finds his situation particularly trying as he has to maintain his family.

Mr. K feels that his children are not aware of such model minority label and they did not discussed this with him.

Future

Mr. K does not foresee any probability of his academic career development in future due principally to financial and time constraints. He has to shoulder his responsibility of providing for the daily economic needs of his family. The bleak future for academic development is not the fault of his intellectual ability as he has achieved a perfect Grade Point Average in the several courses he has taken at a community college. Formal academic education for him is, therefore, at an end; his education now is principally informal, comprising the experiences that he obtains from his business enterprise and interactions with his new environment. His main preoccupation now is to manage his second-hand goods business and to facilitate the education of his children. He is optimistic that in running his business, there are may be other related opportunities available to him. He feels that the key to success is learning and profiting from the work itself. He says, "Success comes from getting experiences." He believes that with more experience, one tends to be more successful. He cites an example, the purchasing and reselling of antiques--that "if you know the value of a piece, you will know what price to pay. On the other hand, if you do not know the value, you dare not buy. Hence, you will lose out to others." In this respect, he resolves to work hard and gain wider knowledge relevant to his business.

Participating in community activities is of low priority to him compared to his responsibilities toward his family. He says that he has "no time even for yourself--hardly a free Sunday" and when he is free on Sunday, he spends time with his family. He sees that involvement in community activities is possible only when "one has free time" and as for him, he has to "spend all my time earning a livelihood for my family." He continues, "I cannot get involved in community activities until I am rich and can afford to employ people to do my work." To him, community involvement is also dependent on personal capability to do so like whether "one is healthy or not or whether one has the energy to do it." He likes to engage, in future, in community work dealing with senior citizens. He reiterates, "Family involvement is top priority and you don't get involved with others unless you have no one to spend time with." His retirement is dependent on his attainment of independence. His plan is to depend on his children first before resorting to dependence on social security. Mr. K does not expect great changes in American society. He predicts that the Chinese population may grow somewhat in future but not at a rapid rate. He does not expect the Chinese population to be concentrated in any geographical area but instead will be scattered all over California, as at present because he did not see a lot of Chinese "all at the same time." With the present high rate of illegal immigration, there will not be much societal changes as the impact is being felt now. He expects there will be "more and more Hispanic moving in and white people moving to other places to live with their own people." Mr. K expresses his preference to live with Whites than with Blacks. When the population shifts, he expects his clientele will change and "if more and more good people move away, your clientele will also change and you may have to

move too to a place where you feel comfortable." He considers this as beyond anyone's control.

As for the future of his children, he hopes that they achieve "good careers and high education." In the event that anyone drops out of school or college, he plans to start a business for him/her to continue so as to avoid depending on welfare or getting a job with some other employers. This will also be dependent on their interests whether to pursue the educational or business avenues. He will be in a position to help determine their career path as his children develop. He will let them explore the possibilities themselves and confine his role to that of an advocate and guide. One clear expectation is that his children will not be politically involved. The degree and nature of community involvement will have to depend on whether his children are interested or not or on the nature of their occupation, which may be overwhelmingly public-oriented, like business. On the future trend of the evolution of society he says, "How society changes in future will affect us, especially those caused by the changes in demographics and economic development." He thinks that human mobility seems to be a normal part of American life as he is aware from some readings of his that about 17.0% of the population move their house at least once a year. This, he feels may be due to their movement "to seek satisfaction in living or to job demands due to transfers." He says, "I would expect my children to move if the jobs require them to, to other states or even other countries." As America is already a developed country, he does not expect economic development to have as much impact as other economically developing countries. The determining factors for future changes will be "international policies, new rules and laws like political propositions, namely, Proposition 187."

Mr. K expects he and his children to be "a little bit bicultural" being able to be "culturally independent to continue the culture we love and we do not forget it." At the same time, he feels that he "tend to follow what people do when it is good for us like celebrating Christmas or Thanksgiving." He wants to maintain his meaningful and good culture like "family commitment and unity" where he expects his children to help and encourage each other. Sibling loyalty is top priority to Mr. K. He would not want his children to become laborers where they have to depend on their physical strength as this is only feasible when they are young but become helpless when they are advance in age. He wants his children to work hard while they are young and to save money for their future retirement. He wants his children to become more Americanized so as "to be more accepted in this society but not to forget their own Chinese culture." He expects all his children to become American citizens but for him he may not as he feels that he "still has something in the original country unless becoming an American citizen is more advantageous."

Summary

In reflecting on all his experiences here since making the decision to migrate to the USA from Malaysia, Mr. K says, "The big step we take to migrate, we have a lot of courage and determination." He feels that he has to "make it" after five years in America. He sums up his situation in life as "so far so good as I did not meet too much failures" as there were not too many obstacles. His philosophy is to achieve whatever he wants to do. He is happy that his kids have a lot of future in USA. He feels that on the whole, it was "a nice step to

move comparing the gains and losses." He estimates that whatever gains he has enjoyed in America will cover all the losses he has sustained. He says, "This will give a boost in heading for a brighter future. For now, it is full steam ahead." He encourages his kids to study whatever they want to study. He is planning for his future retirement and hopes "to visit his children once in a while" and the rest of the time spent travelling around the country to see as much of it as possible. He feels that he has a lot of opportunity to enjoy life in future as "America is a powerful country and has a strong dollar." He concludes by saying,

There is a lot of good things in store for us in the future. Don't give up. Deep in my heart, I have done something right for the kids. I have always put the kids ahead of us. I foresee we would not have much problems in future compared to Malaysia.

Interview with Student, Wern (Case 2)

Background

The second student respondent, Wern, is an adolescent who has just entered the University of California at Berkeley as a freshman. He is 17 years old and is the eldest of three siblings, the two younger brothers are 15 and nine

years old. He is presently living in Berkeley and goes home during most weekends. He resides in Mountain View in a single family house with both his parents and two younger siblings. One brother is studying in grade 10 at a local high school while the other is in grade 3 in an elementary school.

Wern and both his siblings were born in Malaysia. He was born on June 27, 1978 in the capital city of Perak, which is one of the more developed states on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Both his parents were tenured teachers in Malaysia; his father was a graduate teacher and has also worked as an educational planning and research officer in the Ministry of Education, Malaysia while his mother was an elementary school teacher. His mother has a pre-university education which qualifies her for admission to the university but due to the racial quota policy of the government, was denied a place at the local universities.

At the time of migration, he was 12 years old. He immigrated with his parents to escape the social, economic and political discrimination based on race sanctioned by Malaysian law. The strongest push factor is the perception, that there is no future for non-Malays in Malaysia in education, economy, social and cultural life, employment, and promotion. Some racist politicians advocate abolition of Chinese education, restrict religious freedom, controlled the economic opportunity and cultural practices of non-Malays. [Obstacles are continuously erected to retard the pace of growth of non-Malay communities through various laws. English, once the principal medium of instruction in schools and higher institutions, was downgraded to a second language in 1970. It was replaced by Bahasa Malaysia, an inadequate language in medicine, science, technology, law, trade and commerce. Non-Malays

employed in government and semi-government services and other agencies within the sphere of their control bear the brunt of the racial policies. Large private corporations could not escape the intrusion of the government on their policies concerning hiring, promotion and decision-making. For non-Malay business corporation to be established, it is a prerequisite for the owners to allocate specific numbers of shares to Malays, sometimes at par rather than current market value and the hiring, promotion and training of personnel must reflect the racial composition of the population regardless of qualifications, efficiency, dedication and other values essential in the competitive world. The government imposed policies designed to exclude non-Malays in special residential schools, participation in public trusts, scholarships, financial allocation for non-Muslim religions, licences, permit to hold social and political gathering, public land ownership, proselytization.]

Educational Background

Wern was immersed in a multi-lingual environment since birth. He was exposed to English, Mandarin, Fujian and Hakka at home in his interactions with parents, aunt, uncles, grand aunts and grand parents. Wern spoke English with both his parents; Mandarin with his aunts and grandmother; Hakka with his maternal grandmother and Fujian with his paternal grandfather. He was enrolled for a year in a kindergarten with English as the main language of instruction. When he was six years of age, he was enrolled in one of the premier Chinese elementary schools in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. There, he was further exposed to an additional language, Bahasa

Malaysia. He was schooled principally in Mandarin as it was the main language of instruction and English and Malay were taught as language subjects. He studied in this school for about four years. He was then transferred to a private school where English was the main medium of instruction at grade six. He studied there for a year before migrating to United States on April 1, 1990.

Given his continuous exposure to English since birth and a year of instructions in a private English school, he experienced no difficulty studying in America. He said he did reasonably well in the informal English and Math assessments conducted by the middle school in which he was enrolled. He studied till the end of the school year, which was just for a duration of two and a half months. On the question of his English proficiency, he says, "I consider English as one of my natural languages." It is now his most proficient language as his proficiency in Mandarin gradually deteriorated due to the lack of practice and exposure. Although he attended the weekly night class at Palo Alto Chinese School, for two hours, his proficiency level experienced a slow decline. The limited frequency and length of exposure to Mandarin is insufficient for him to maintain his level of competency.

While in Malaysia, both his parents communicated with him in English only. He was provided with a tremendous amount of reading materials in English. He was read to constantly in English when he was young by both parents and sometimes, his aunts. He was also read to in Mandarin by his grandmother and other aunts. English language was taught only at grade 3 in his Chinese elementary school and as his level of proficiency exceeded that of the school curriculum, he did not profit from the instructions. For instance, he

had been writing English in paragraphs and reading at secondary school level, but was taught simple content words. Exercises and tests were confined to single-word filling in blanks.

At present, English is the only language spoken at home and is also the language of communication among the siblings. While studying in America, he did not experience any problem learning English or other courses and communicating with teachers and peers. When he was in grades 7 and 8, he was told by his teachers of English that his sentence constructions were different, which was inevitable as Malaysia was a British colony for almost 90 years (1876-1957) and the legacy of the King's English is still pervasive in Malaysia. Initially, he says his accent was difficult for his peers to understand, but he was able to overcome it in a relatively short period of time.

Wern considers himself proficient in English. He is presently learning Mandarin in college and expects his proficiency level to rise in the near future to CALP (cognitive/academic language proficiency) level. He considers himself bilingual. Although Fujian was the dialect of his forefathers, he does not speak it, but is able to understand what is spoken. He considers it unfortunate that he has lost totally his ability to speak Malay and Hakka.

Attitude towards Education

In the public elementary school in Malaysia, Wern was instructed in Mandarin while English and Malay were taught as language subjects. At the private school, Wern was instructed in English with Malay as a language subject. He studied in the public elementary school for four and a half years

and one and a half years in a private school. [The competitive spirit, school setting, high expectations of teachers, administrators and students discussed previously in Elwin's experience, can be applied to Wern's experience.]

Malaysian and American Education Compared

One of the outstanding differences that Wern found in the education system between Malaysia and the United States is, there are "more options and electives to take in the curriculum like oceanography, architectural drawing, computer education, geology and law. The curriculum in Malaysia is standardized and limited to a large degree." It is compulsory for every student to study Mandarin, Bahasa Malaysia and English in the elementary Chinese school in Malaysia. He feels that there is an over-emphasis on languages, whereas in the American curriculum, only English and a foreign language are generally required for graduation, but in his school district, a foreign language has not yet been made compulsory. He is happy that, "The students have a great amount of latitude and freedom to decide what they want to study in the school."

The second difference he experienced is instructional methodology. He found the Malaysian instructional methods "too traditional where teachers simply lecture or teach in front of the board, students take notes and then, do their homework regularly to prepare themselves for the final examination." However, in the United States, "at the elementary and high school levels, alternative teaching methods are common such as cooperative grouping, guest speakers, using videos, field trips and project writing." However, he thinks

some of these activities are "not entirely productive and sometimes are a waste of time, rather than a help for student learning." This happens when the academic content is simple and group work is regarded as fun and socializing activities to pass time.

In academic assessment and evaluation, Wern finds the Malaysian system,

much stricter and when a student does not gain an A in any one subject, his overall score will go down. The Malaysian grading system starts from 100% and points are deducted when mistakes were made whereas in the United States grading system, one starts from zero and credit is given with each point, argument or rationale made.

In American schools, he finds it comparatively easy to gain an A, for example, in physical education, "an A plus is guaranteed as long as the student turns up regularly in proper attire and participates in the activities." In addition, extra credits can be earned to help improve the grade.

He finds discipline in Malaysian schools stricter than in American schools. For instance, students in Malaysia "usually show up on time because the teacher will punish them if they do not." They will also "try to do their homework as often as possible and pay attention to small details in their dress and manner of behavior." In American schools, he finds "the discipline is less strict and students feel free to wear any type of clothes they like and also accord the teachers less respect." He observes that American parents expect less from students in schools: "They prefer to ask the children whether they have fun at school and whether they enjoy themselves, and not whether they learn anything

productive or not." The teachers and administrators are also very tolerant of student misbehaviors to the degree that he perceives they do not care.

Wern finds American parents are very involved in school activities, unlike Malaysian parents. However, the nature of the school activities that American parents are involved in are totally different. He finds the American parents, like to get involved much more in activities like the parent-teachers' association, meetings, field trips, conferences, back-to-school nights and camping. Malaysian parents usually encourage their children to learn in school and talk to the teachers about studies like Math subject instead of extra-curricular activities.

Wern's experience shows that American teachers attempt to make students feel more "at home," whereas, " Malaysian teachers are often more business-like and they work like robots." However, he considers Malaysian teachers more able to understand precisely and immediately what the students want. He says, "If you want to ask for homework in Malaysia, the teachers will get quickly to the point with the minimum of delay." On the other hand, he found a very distinct difference in the communication pattern of American teachers, that is, before they answer you, they "will try to understand the way you think before they can help you." The amount of learning in American school depends on one's willingness and determination to learn. He observes that one can learn the minimum in school and yet be able to graduate or one can acquire a tremendous amount of knowledge equivalent to college-level work. He says, "Everything is up to the student to seize the opportunity to learn."

On the question as to which school system he likes better, he feels he likes the American schools slightly better when compared to Malaysian schools.

He says, "Both systems have their own strong and weak points. It is difficult to condemn or approve of a particular system based simply on one aspect." He notes that American schools "tend to be more liberal and the teachers, more lenient." When translated into practice, he finds that "the students are given a greater latitude in choosing their courses, and the freedom to learn what interests them. An American student is given the opportunity to focus his education towards his interest." This, he finds, is one of the greatest strengths in the American system of education and this is possible only in countries with great resources and wealth, "American schools are well funded and there are many facilities, such as libraries, computers, swimming pool, after-school tutoring that students can take advantage of." He contrasts this with the Malaysian schools, noting that they "tend to be less well-funded. Public schools are especially poor, with forty or fifty students crammed into a class. This results in a loss of personal attention, and the students have no choice as to what they can focus their attention on." [Malaysian schools are funded by a national budget allocation annually and on most occasions, education sector takes up the biggest proportion of the budget. Hence, there is no question of the education establishment going bankrupt as experienced by certain school districts in America. The Malaysian education system will go bankrupt only when the whole economy collapses.]

Strengths and Weaknesses in Both Education Systems

He finds one of the strengths in Malaysian education lies in its strict discipline where students are not "allowed to fool around in class and the

students are attentive to what the teacher is teaching." He is aware that everybody in Malaysia takes education seriously from government to parents, school administrators, teachers and students. In the United States, students "do not do their homework, talk in class, go to parties the night before, and hold a casual attitude towards education. They seem to be able to get away with that."

He considers the weaknesses in the Malaysian system of education as being "inflexible" in terms of teacher's grading policy, teacher's attitude of a "knows-all," final authority in class and a lack of effort to understand the students. These make them appear impersonal and "cold." Besides this, he states that physical punishment is meted out to students through the use of a cane or ruler for minor infractions such as forgetting to pass up homework, talking in class unnecessarily or committing spelling mistakes. Wern knows that teachers are forbidden from imposing corporal punishments but they still do. He thinks that this is due to either the ignorance on the part of parents and students about their legal rights or the reluctance of parents to bring legal suits against teachers or school. [Malaysia is at the other extreme of the situation in America, which is considered as a litigious society. Parents shun bringing legal actions against the school. Furthermore, if there is any compensation in Malaysia, it is only a miniscule amount, unlike the hundreds of thousands or even million-dollar awards in America. Another discouraging factor is that parents who sued the school will automatically be regarded as trouble-makers by the general public, regardless of the nature of the complaint.]

Wern states that another strength in the American school system is the overall small class size, about 20-30 students per class whereas in Malaysia, it is about 40-55 students per class. Despite small class size in America, the

amount of homework given by the school is lighter than those given in Malaysian schools. Wern thinks that this could be due to the general perception of the parents that "school is a place of socialization and fun and students should not be burdened with work."

Problems Encountered in American Schools and Coping Strategies

Wern reveals that he has been confronted with a few problems in high school. The problems were mostly confined to his social adaptation to a different school culture rather than in academics. He says that he found AP mathematics and science particularly difficult in high school. Initially, he could not understand the course material. He gives two reasons for his difficulty. First, he admits that he does not have a very strong aptitude for mathematics and science. Second, he felt that the teacher spent too little time explaining the subject material. He says attempted to solve this problem by asking the teachers. However, on numerous occasions, some teachers just did not have time to answer his questions. He relates that he has also tried to see the teachers during their preparatory period or lunch time. But it was not always possible. He is particularly happy that some teachers organized review lessons after school hours to prepare them for major tests. He also solved his academic problem by having a private tutor or go to the academic center in school for advice. As a consequence, he did not sit for AP tests for the hard sciences like Chemistry, Physics or higher level Mathematics. He only took what he describes as half AP for Math and Computer Science. However, he was especially happy that he was able to score the maximum grade for AP Biology

and Psychology. He also scored a 4 for his AP English and a 3 for AP United States History. Thus, he coped with his academic challenges by concentrating on what he thinks his aptitude lies and to seek help from others.

Wern faced some social problems initially, while attempting to adjust to the new school culture. He says,

Initially, I experienced some trouble adapting to the American way of life. When I first arrived here, I found many of the mannerisms and cultural mores to be very awkward and foreign. At first I made little effort to adapt, but as time went on, I felt I had to, at least, understand the culture to be able to survive.

He found out that as a consequence of his not adapting to the American culture quick enough, he was often "teased by my classmates in school about my ignorance of American fashion, movies, mannerism, etc." He found that with his effort to understand the American culture and through the passage of time he "simply began to accept and adjust to the customs here."

Another strategy which he found helpful in coping with adjustments was to "make some friends in high school, who made it more comfortable for me to adapt to the culture here." He says that at first he was a bit sensitive to the different behavioral patterns of his classmates, teachers and the overall system of school administration and management. He says,

Sometimes I found that the teachers do not care what is going on in the classroom with all the noises made by the students talking, laughing and shouting. I have also to adjust to the general unconcerned attitude of the students towards academic work."

In school, he experienced on several occasions, some American students ganging up on him, and he had to report them to the administrator. He relates the most serious incident happened when three students took his paper bag containing his food to throw to each other. He used his pencil to stab one of the boys to stop them and this landed him in the disciplinarian's office. On other occasions, he had to tolerate the bullies in school. For instance, he related that in his middle school, a bully just snatched from him the magazine he was reading in full view of the teacher. What the teacher did was just to comment that the bully should not do this and did not even insist that he (the bully) return the magazine to him. He also relates that he was not very confident of the school administrators' willingness to take action on indiscipline in schools.

Wern states that for him to succeed in school, he needs tutoring in certain subjects that he found difficult and he had subsequently taken action to resolve it. Realizing that he is more inclined towards the liberal arts and humanities, he is devoting his future studies and career towards this area. He compares his intellectual ability and aptitude to other students saying,

Although other Chinese students focus toward engineering or other science courses, I find that I tend to do better in English and other liberal arts courses. Other than a difference of interest, I find that my abilities are roughly on par with those of other students. I have little difficulty keeping up with the pace in schools.

At present, he plans to major in legal studies and/or business administration in college. He also feels that hard work is the road to success.

For Wern, school is extremely important. He regards school as a place for him to seek formal education and it "also made me more aware of the

traditions and world events. It has also made me more aware of the world as a whole. Whenever I am curious at something, I can usually find my answer in school."

Wern has some likes and dislikes of school. Concerning dislikes he says, Sometimes I dislike certain teaching methods in American schools, especially when some teachers emphasized group work and teamwork that involve little or no learning. Furthermore, these activities bog the class down and prevent students who are really interested in learning from progressing.

He finds that there is too much preoccupation with attempts at making the class "more interesting than to make it more instructive." Other than this, he finds that he likes going to school, and enjoys learning challenging courses. Wern acknowledges that he is a student who learns best through the more traditional method of teaching where he can enjoy cogent discussion and teacher instructions. His second dislike of American school is non-academic in nature. He hates some students who want to have fun at the expense of other students bullying, threatening physical harm and shouting verbal abuses.

Gender Issues

Wern believes that there is no difference in abilities between Chinese boys and girls. In Malaysia, he found that male and female students were treated the same by parents, teachers and school administrators. He is aware that in traditional times there was the inclination to "give the females less preference and consider them inferior to males." However, he feels there is a

shift in perception toward viewing males and females alike and the trend is gaining ground. He feels the cause of this shift in thinking is due to the "Malaysian and American societies' probable attempt at equality this as a result of the successful and proven efforts of females themselves." He finds biased treatment

it is usually challenged in court and widely publicized. He says American women have been advocating for their rights through numerous women movements and there were great improvements made towards equality for the women.

As Wern has no sister sibling, he was unable to make any comparison on parental attitudes and treatment of girls. He believes that in education, females are as capable as males and they have all the freedom to choose whatever courses they prefer to study. This freedom of choice is also reflected at the college level. In theory and pronouncements, American females have more equal opportunity to pursue educational courses and occupations they choose than Malaysian females. However, from the protestations that frequently appear in the American mass media, Wern thinks that in practice, there are still cases of discrimination. He feels that women should have equal access, rights and occupation as the males.

Adjustments to American Society/Culture

Like any new immigrants, Wern has to make adjustments to his usual way of life so as to minimize the impact of the differences in cultural norms, beliefs and values.

First Impression

When Wern first arrived in the United States, he noticed that almost everything was new: the type of food eaten, buildings, roads, schools and the omnipresent English spoken in contrast to the situation in Malaysia. He says he felt "awkward and far removed from the Malaysian culture." His first impression of the general surrounding is its spaciousness with many parks dotting the city. The houses are single story and very well spread out, unlike in the city of Kuala Lumpur where the houses are very compact and multi-storeyed. Most of the American houses have large yard, whereas in Malaysia, the yard is very small. There are numerous libraries in America, whereas in Malaysia, it is very difficult to find a library in the neighborhood.

When Wern was first enrolled in a middle school, his general impression was that school was "disorganized and confusing." He felt the school environment was very different from that in Malaysia. He says he was not scared but overwhelmed by the many differences and "strange feelings of being in a new environment." He found the layout of the school to be very different from that in Malaysia. Upon registering in school and before being led to class, he remembers asking the counselor some questions pertaining to school such as the schedule, location of classrooms, the meaning of hall pass, and the grading system. He recalls he was then shown by a student the class to which he has to report, the location of his locker, and the bathroom. He was taken to the class to be introduced to the teacher who, in turn, introduced him to his new classmates. The first thing that struck him was the small class size and the different look of the American students as distinctly different from his Chinese

classmates in Malaysia. He also found the school very well equipped with modern technology such as computers, library, and drafting equipment. The standard of English was higher than anticipated but Math at the middle school was easy. He was impressed with the confident manner the students speak. He gradually got accustomed to the different ways of teaching such as field trips, work groups and television.

Malaysian and American Culture/Society Compared

Wern states that it took him a few months to get adjusted to the new culture and to make a few friends. Wern found several cultural differences between Malaysia and the United States. In the interactions among students in school, he says,

Sometimes I find that the manner in which American students treat each other is much more open than it was in Malaysia. I was not used to this and it seemed very new to me. With time, however, I learned to be more open and socialized more with friends.

He finds his classmates very "rowdy and noisy. They don't pay attention to the teacher, were rude and played tricks on the teachers." This gave him the impression that the class is not very well organized. Furthermore, some teachers came late to class and they appeared not to particularly care about the class. Besides the general behavior of American students in class, he also found that their interests and attitude toward education and sports are very different from Malaysian students. American students discuss baseball and football, whereas Malaysia students are preoccupied with badminton and

soccer. American students tend to take a relaxed attitude toward education. He says, "I am out of place and find it difficult to accept the American attitude toward education. They seem to take school as a place to socialize and have fun besides acquiring academic knowledge." This is a great contrast to the Malaysian situation, where schooling is a serious business and students compete to score the highest grade possible.

Wern considers American people and students to be more friendly and they usually wish each other with a simple "Hi." He finds this lacking in Malaysia where people do not purposely go out of their way to make a person feel at ease. Wern is impressed that American schools are generally well-funded and well-equipped with a great variety of facilities, which he feels fortunate to be able to use. One of the academic services that American students enjoy free of charge is the tutoring services provided by more senior students and outside volunteers from Stanford University. This is not available in Malaysia. Another cultural difference he experienced is that the people here are more liberal in their attitude toward each other and are more "open and accepting." American students appear to value friendship more as they seem to have "a wide circle of friends and are more relaxed toward each other."

Wern notices that there is a free flow of information in society and a more tolerant attitude toward differences of opinion on all social, economic or political issues. This is evident by the presence of a great multiplicity of mass media such as television, printed media, forums, demonstrations, rallies and local meetings which are not controlled by the government. American students in colleges and universities enjoy more freedom and are not shackled by unreasonable rules and regulations. This is in stark contrast to the situation in

Malaysia, where all forms of public communication and assembly are closely monitored and controlled by the government. There are even laws formulated to suppress dissent against the Malaysian government's policies.

Wern relates that Americans have a distinctly different consumption pattern from Malaysians. The Americans tend to spend more, buy more cars, computers and other material goods either through cash or on credit. On the other hand, Malaysians tend to be a saving society and are more thrifty.

One cultural similarity that he found in the value system of Malaysian Chinese and Americans is their high value placed on hard-work. The second similarity is the grading system in school, where letters are used to denote grades but not the manner of assigning grades. American teachers are more lenient where students' effort and positive attitude are taken into consideration, whereas in Malaysia, the grades are dependent on standardized tests. He says, "The Malaysian teachers concentrate more on ability than attitude."

Problems Encountered and Coping Strategies

Wern opines that due to cultural differences, he finds himself unable to understand why American students are so carefree about school work. On the other hand, they place great emphasis on socialization. He cites as examples the types of topic for conversation. American students usually discuss what they do at parties and social gatherings.

Wern feels that he is not "talkative or as communicative as the American students." Hence, he was not as participative as other students in class. However, he says that he became more accepting of the way of thinking of

American students and their mannerisms as time goes by. As a result, he felt less and less awkward in their company. He did not go to any particular person for help but allowed himself to be "absorbed by the influences and over time he got use to them." He realized that he had to learn by himself to be more talkative and volunteer answers more in class. He suggested that to reduce the incidence of being picked on by the bullies, he has to make more friends by becoming more open as other American students. He usually discussed his problems with his parents to get a sympathetic hearing and valued their suggestions on how to cope with the problems he faced.

Racial Discrimination

Wern recollects he has not been overtly discriminated against whether in school or outside of school. In school, he was just one of the Asian students that made up 30% of the school population. Hence, he felt he was not out of place in high school. He adds that even if there had been covert discrimination against him, it did not affect his grade. He relates that the condescending attitude of some Americans made him feel discriminated against when they commented on how well he spoke English, initially. However, he found that as time passed, "people put no notice on me and stopped to take me as a foreigner."

Generational Conflict

In comparing his values and beliefs with that of his parents, he found there are no significant differences. He says, "I do not really observe any large difference. We all share roughly the same values and beliefs such as diligence, perseverance, determination, self-reliance, emphasis on academic work in school and less socializing, and respect for the elders." Wern added that he does not harbor any intention of "rebellious" against his parents as he sees this as a uniquely American tradition.

Impact of American Culture

In recounting his experiences for the past five years in a new environment and the impact this had on his system of values, beliefs, and attitude he says, "When I initially arrived in America, I was pretty close in my ideas." However, through the passage of time he became more open, trusting, talkative and is able to accept American people's ideas, mannerisms and way of behavior. He is now more agreeable to the fact that "making friends is more important in American society than an overemphasis on academic work, be more street-wise and practical in dealing with American people." He realizes that "social abilities are just as important as academic abilities." There are also certain values he found unchanged, for instance, in his studying habit and manner of dressing. Besides this, his attitude towards diligence in academics is further strengthened as he recognizes that one of the main reasons for his migration is educational opportunity. He is able to identify himself with the

outstanding academic performance of a small section of diligent American students who are concerned with education. With this identification, he creates for himself a conducive and competitive atmosphere.

Wern has been presented with two sets of life-values--one American and the other Chinese. At times these values conflict and at another, complement each other. On the question as to which Chinese values that he wants to retain and the reasons for their retention, he says,

I want to retain all of the Chinese culture because I think that it is probably for the best. I am still in the process of deciding which aspects of the American and Chinese cultures to accept, but so far, Chinese culture has been my "base"--the source I turn to when faced with difficulties or new situations. I find myself considering situations from a typically Chinese perspective and I identify more readily with other Chinese friends than American friends.

The Chinese values he finds he should retain are the values of diligence, perseverance, self-motivation, respect and trust in elder generation because "whenever I have problems, I always turn to my elders." He feels that the Chinese values of life still apply directly to him and that if he adheres to them, it would be for his own benefit. For instance, in education, he finds that American education provides a window of opportunity for him, but it is only relevant if and when he seizes the opportunity to make a success out of it. This can come about only with the inner strength and desire to be self-motivated to succeed.

Among the Chinese values which he considers rejecting are the feelings of arrogance and sense of superiority due to their long cultural history. He finds

that there are some Chinese who always think that they are the best and are suspicious of another person's motive toward them.

On the other hand, he admires Americans having the "tendency to be more open in their attitude toward others. This is one trend that I find is a virtue and should be emulated." He states that he would also like to copy the "can-do" attitude of Americans which he finds is "very positive and encouraging." One American value he intends to reject is the disregard toward elderly parents. He finds them "short-sighted" as parents are more experienced in life and can contribute to the well-being of the children.

Model Minority

Wern has often heard the phrase, "model minority" applied to Chinese. By "model minority," Wern means that Chinese are excelling in their studies and in their economic well-being. His attitude is,

It does not mean much, being merely a label and at best a generalization. I do not have any "special" reaction to being a member of this minority. I feel that my actions are my own and whether or not my race is 'Chinese' has little to do with it. Of course, I would like to be a source of pride to my race, but I feel that any credit resulting from my actions is not attributable to my race, but to me alone.

Reasons Chinese Students are Excelling in Schools

Wern explains that his friends were able to do well in their studies because of their hard work and determination, not because of their race. He attributes this to the more attentive disposition of Chinese students, and the refrain from "fooling around and playing tricks on others." He notices Chinese students often form study groups to help each other. They attend tutoring sessions and work hard late into the night, while others play and do not concentrate on their studies. Another possible contribution to their scholastic success is the part played by their parents in "making them work hard" and the inculcation of the concept of self-reliance. Wern also notes that Chinese students in general tend to do better in their studies than non-Chinese students. This may be due, he feels, to an aspect of the Chinese culture that encourages hard work and perseverance. Thus, Chinese students perform better not because they are smarter but because they work harder.

Wern knows of some Chinese students who fail in their academic studies. He thinks that this is due to their "joining other American students and friends in fooling around and looking down on other Chinese students." He finds them "simply accept the American culture at face value in their quest for assimilation."

Impact of Model Minority Status

Wern says he does not feel he is different from any other race. He quotes an instance where this kind of labelling can mislead others. For example, when he talked to his high school counselor about his future plans for college education, she assumed that he was good in Math and proceeded to

recommend him a series of colleges that she thought were providing excellent Math courses. Wern concludes that just because he is Chinese, the counselor thought that he must be excellent in Math. On the contrary, he is just average. Wern is aware of the situation when he says,

Many other Chinese friends who have excelled in their studies have been called the members of the "model minority." They have done well in their studies, especially math and engineering, and have earned the respect and admiration of others. They also do not respond in any particular way to this labeling, treating it exactly for what it is--a label, nothing more.

Wern feels that he is treated no differently by teachers, classmates and administrators on account of his race. He says, "Others are very open-minded and freely accept my race. They treat me with the respect as are accorded to others. This made me feel as if my race has little or no impact on the way other people treat me."

The Future

Wern did well enough in high school to be accepted to UC Berkeley. He attributed his success to his general mastery of the English language.

Wern has set the target for himself to enter law school after his undergraduate years and to pursue a career in the legal field. He aims to be a public defender, private attorney or perhaps a judge. His reasons for choosing these careers are that he wants to diversify the legal profession, to make a difference in society by helping disadvantaged Chinese Americans socially,

economically and politically and to help erode the stereotype of Chinese professionals in medicine and science. To achieve his goal, Wern realizes that first, he needs an undergraduate degree in college to enter law school and this entails four years of hard work in addition to the extra time and effort at law school.

As a Chinese American, Wern feels that his race will not be a hindrance to his development. He says, "My race is not really an issue because I feel that my English will help me immensely in dealing with other Americans." He believes everyone in the United States is given the opportunity to progress. The extent of success is dependent upon each individual's effort expended on the endeavor. He believes that as long as hard work is put in, positive results will be gained.

When asked to provide a sense of his overall reflections on his migration to the United States, Wern responded it has been a positive experience despite a few minor socialization glitches. He feels he has a great future ahead of him and is optimistic that life would be for the better. He feels the initial discomfort at adjustments to a new culture was worth it and concludes,

I feel that I am successful so far and that I have been given more opportunities than I bargained for. I have the potential to excel at what I am best in. I am not constrained like in the Malaysian world, and there are many opportunities for self-fulfillment.

Summary

Wern was well-prepared to live in American society with a minimum of problems due to his facility in English. He is brought up in a Confucian family background to treat education with great seriousness and to respect authority and elders. He has been exposed to both traditional Chinese tendency to discriminate against females and the changing attitude to discard such discrimination. It appears that the latter attitude has taken a stronger foothold on his concept of equality of the sexes. Wern's problem in adjustment to the American society and culture is not linguistic or academic, but rather social. When confronted with problems, Wern would usually resort to parental guidance after having a first attempt at solving them himself. Usually the problems were surmountable. Wern is aware of the model minority label as applied to the Chinese but he does not believe in the concept as a race-based phenomenon. He believes it to be individualistic rather than a group characteristic. Wern holds an optimistic view of the future as a Chinese-American and is gearing himself to participate fully in the society's changing cultural pattern by engaging in an area of life that does not see much representation of people from Asian descent.

Interview with mother, Mrs. T (Case 2)

Background

Mrs. T was born in a village town of Selama in one of the west coast states of Perak in Peninsular Malaysia in 1951. Selama is situated in the economically under-developed part of Perak. When she was two years old, her family moved to another town, Tanjung Tualang, in the same state. She lived in this town for three years, which she described as unlucky because her father's business suffered extensive losses. From here, her family moved to another bigger town of Batu Gajah. She stayed there until she completed her O-level (equivalent to 11 grade) and A-level (equivalent to freshman year in college) education. She had to transit daily to the capital city, Ipoh, of the state for two years to complete her A-level education. Ipoh is about 12 miles from her place of residence. Her whole family moved to Ipoh in 1970 and has lived there until she got married in 1978.

Mrs. T's father and mother were born in China. They migrated from a small village populated by the Hakka dialect group in the province of Kwangtung in Southern China. Her father migrated to Malaysia first to work as a clerk in a rubber retail business until he saved enough money to start a business of his own. He then petitioned for his mother and wife to join him in Malaysia. He died in 1971 of an undiagnosed stomach ulcer.

Mrs. T's mother was a full-time housewife, taking care of the entire household. Mrs. T's father was able to earn just enough for the family expenditure from his business. In addition to this business, he was also an

unlicensed money-lender providing money to other Chinese businessmen who were in need of cash for their businesses. Mrs. T considered her family to be in the lower middle income group.

Mrs. T's siblings consisted of two boys and five girls. She was born the third child. Her elder sister and brother were born in China, while the rest of her siblings, in Malaysia. She was the first child born in Malaysia.

Mrs. T comes from a lineage of scholarly ancestors with her paternal grandfather passing the imperial examination in China, which qualified him to be appointed a magistrate. However, owing to the collapse of the Manchu government, he was lost the opportunity to serve in this capacity. Her father was educated in China, but due to the internal social, economic and political upheavals, he decided to migrate to Malaysia in 1933 to work as a clerk in a rubber dealer store owned by his brother-in-law in Penang (one of the northern states of Malaysia) for a few years. Subsequently, he went back to China to get married. After his second child was born in China, he returned to Malaysia to start his own business. However, he did not have much aptitude in business and did not possess much business acumen. Mrs. T says, "His talent was in scholarly work and he loved to read. He would always prefer to read, write and draw than do business." She reveals her father made immense profits in the town where she was born, but due to harassment by communists who extorted money from him, chaos resulting from battles between government forces and the communists, and, fearing implication as a spy by both sides, he moved his business to another town. There, his business suffered losses. At that time her father was also involved in horse-racing and the losses incurred further drained his savings. As a result, "the family lived in hardship for about three years."

She says, "It was fortunate my father realized that horse-racing was a swindle and was able to break completely the habit of this gambling."

Mrs. T's eldest sister managed to enter Malaysia in 1951 when she was nine years old. She experienced a difficult time adjusting to the new environment and receiving her education in English. Despite the difficulty in learning a new language, she managed to pass all standardized public examinations up to the O-level, after which she entered a teacher training college to become a math and science teacher. She has recently retired from teaching and spends her time giving private tutoring to students and writing textbooks in mathematics.

Mrs. T's elder brother, the second child in the family also entered Malaysia at the same time with her sister at six years of age. He successfully completed his A-level education (preuniversity level) in Malaysia. He was awarded a Japanese scholarship to study engineering in Japan in 1967. He pursued his education there for eight years. He returned to Malaysia in 1975 with a Masters in Engineering degree. He has ever since worked for a Japanese silicon wafer company in the capital city of Malaysia. He is at present the manager of the Research and Development Department.

Mrs. T's first younger sister left for the United States after completing her O-level examination under a grant to study in Minnesota when she was 18 years old. She completed her undergraduate work in biochemistry. She continued to study for her masters degree in food technology and subsequently a second masters in Asian Studies. She is now an American citizen. She has just graduated as a medical doctor from Stanford University. She is married to an American and currently lives in Palo Alto, California.

Mrs. T's second younger sister graduated from the University of Malaya with a bachelor degree in education and is a secondary school teacher. The course she was "forced" to take was not even her second choice. She wanted to pursue a career in dentistry or law, but due to racial quota, she was not successful. Her results would have guaranteed her a place in dentistry or law if she had been a Malay. The offer was made slightly more attractive when she was allowed to enter the university as a sophomore.

Mrs. T's third younger sister and the last child in the family holds a degree in business administration from the University of Singapore. She is now working as an advertising executive in Singapore. She was more fortunate than the other siblings to have the opportunity to pursue the course she wanted overseas. As the family's financial situation was stronger, they could afford her an education overseas at the University of Singapore.

Mrs. T's younger brother completed his O-level education in a public school in Malaysia and his preuniversity education as a private student studying with the help of paid tutors. He is presently residing in Singapore and working as a pilot with Singapore Airline.

All Mrs. T's siblings are well-educated and are earning substantial incomes to be classified in the middle and upper middle income groups.

Mrs. T received her entire education from kindergarten to preuniversity levels in Malaysia. The medium of instruction in schools during her time was English. She completed her preuniversity education with three principal level passes and two subsidiary passes in 1971. [The maximum that could be obtained was four principal level passes and one subsidiary level pass. Her results at that time, if based on a merit system, easily qualified her for a place in

local university. The same result would be considered as extremely outstanding, if obtained by a Malay candidate. However, due to the racial quota imposed on university admission, she was rejected despite having a result which was better than many other successful candidates. Some successful Malay candidates were admitted to the university on the strength of only one principal pass.] After being denied the opportunity for higher education, she attempted to pursue the next best course of action by applying for a place in teacher training colleges. She was not selected, again, due to the racial quota. She had to work as a temporary, untenured teacher for the next three years before she was offered teacher training conducted during the school holidays. This qualified her subsequently to become a tenured teacher at the elementary level. She taught in this capacity for 18 years before migrating to the United States with her family in April, 1990.

As her husband was a graduate teacher in Malaysia, their combined earnings placed them in the middle-middle income level. On arrival in the United States, only her husband was able to resume his occupation as a teacher as she has no undergraduate degree. She has to work in a private preschool while studying for her early childhood education units at a community college to fulfil the necessary state requirement. Their combined incomes placed her family at the lower middle income level hovering just above the poverty line, representing a drop in socio-economic status. When she migrated to the United States, she was 38 years old in 1990. She migrated with her husband and three sons.

Her reasons for migrating contain both pull and push factors. The push-factor to migrate was especially strong. She says,

The Malaysian racial policies are oppressive; they are very close to that of the apartheid policy in South Africa. The racial policies permeates all field of life--social, cultural, economic and political. I feel that my children will have absolutely no chance to excel in what they are best at and they have no chance to decide their future. I am fed-up with the government racial propagandas, which show up everywhere. They control all the mass media, they can imprison you without trial, deny you licences to operate business, cut you off from hiring, promotion and training in government departments and most fearful of all, the one-race Malay army can kill you with impunity as happened during the racial riot of 1969 which was worse than the Los Angeles riot.

Her second reason for migrating was, better education for her children. By the time she migrated, she observed that the Malaysian government's education policy appeared to have gone from bad to worse. She cites as examples, the use of English as a medium of instruction has been completely abolished and is now studied only as a second language in public schools. Her objections to the use of Bahasa Malaysia for being impractical due to inadequate technical terms especially for science, technology, medicine, and law. Another factor is the lack of all types of references in Bahasa Malaysia for advanced studies such as books, micro-fiche, films, video, and other high technology media. In addition, she feels the language has no international standing; very few people use the language outside of Malaysia and Indonesia. She has only one option to ensure that her children receive quality education, that is, to send them overseas. However, she would not be able to do so due to heavy financial cost.

She reasoned that the only way was to migrate. From her own experience of being excluded from higher education, her husband denied training and promotion opportunities, and her siblings' denial to the professional course of her choice, she is determined to ensure that her children not suffer these racist policies again.

Mrs. T's third reason for migration was social. She found the government policies were aimed at eradicating the cultures of non-Malays by proclaiming in the National Culture Policy that there is only one Malaysian culture, that is, the Malay culture. This is evidenced by the many policy decisions of the government--that only the Malay culture can represent Malaysia in international gathering, that all non-Malay cultural celebrations in public are subjected to approval by the police, uncontrolled verbal racist remarks by politicians and government officers, banning Christian priests from overseas to work in Malaysia, obstructing the building of temples and churches through restrictive laws and bureaucratic arbitrariness, making it a criminal offense to proselytize to the Malays but not vice-versa and many other one-sided racial policies.

The fourth reason was economic, where she cites as one instance, the government's restrictions on the issuance of all kinds of licence to non-Malays ranging from petty hawkers to large corporations. The second instance was the issue of new shares, where a certain portion are set aside for Malays before inviting the public to subscribe to the remaining shares. Third, public trusts were established for Malays only using public taxes collected from all races. Fourth, specific land sites were declared Malay reserves, that is, they are not tradable. Fifth, land owned by non-Malays must be subjected to joint-ownership by Malays before they were permitted to develop, often at original price.

The fifth reason was political. The special privileges, as enshrined in the constitution are non-negotiable and criticisms of them are subjected to imprisonment without trial. There is blatant gerrymandering of constituencies, where one Malay vote is equivalent to as many as four non-Malay votes. Other criticisms on any issues not classified as "sensitive" are subjected to harassment by the police. Political oppositionists are banned from holding government posts but not government supporters. Pressures and retaliations are exacted on any large corporation that hire political opponents. There is also an atmosphere of mistrust among Malays and non-Malays, where the former have expressed their desire to banish all non-Malays from Malaysia and the latter reject the claim by the Malays as the "original" people in Malaysia.

Mrs. T feels the general restrictions of human freedom are applied discriminatorily in two sets of laws, one for the Malays and the other for the non-Malays. This convinced her that her children will be able to grow up in a fair and just society. On the other hand, she anticipates that life in a new country will not be easy, especially at her late age of migration at 38 years and her husband, at 45. Despite the disadvantage of age, she and her husband preferred to take the risk and sacrifice for the sake of the children. Although she has waited for eight years for her permanent resident status through her sister's petition, she did not receive any reply from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. When a new immigration program was implemented by the American government called the Lottery System (OP-1) in 1989, her husband was successful in being selected.

Educational Background

Mrs. T's highest level of academic education was preuniversity. Her highest professional qualification is the teacher training certificate awarded by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. Her academic and professional qualifications are recognized by the Teacher Credentialling Commission of California. However, she cannot teach in the public schools as she does not possess a Bachelor's degree. Her educational experience in the United States is confined to her enrollment at De Anza college in 1990 where she obtained the necessary units in early childhood education for employment. However, her objective was not to obtain an A. A. or a Bachelor's degree as she feels she has no more interest in academic pursuits. Her reasons are: it takes too long to obtain an undergraduate degree; there are too many examinations to pass; American students are too "undisciplined" to make teaching an attractive option; teachers are not generally respected by students or parents; and, it is relatively low-paying. She adds, "I am too old to go for academic education. I prefer to earn enough to finance my children through college." In weighing all the pros and cons and the accompanying opportunity costs, she finds it unfulfilling to enter the teaching profession again. She says she has considered other professions like nursing, occupational therapy, family day-care provider, or going into food business on her own. She is waiting for the most appropriate time to stride out.

Mrs. T considers herself proficient in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Cantonese, Hakka and to a lesser degree, Mandarin and Taiwanese. She learned English and Bahasa Malaysia in schools as academic subjects while

she acquired Cantonese, Mandarin and Taiwanese from daily communications. The languages she most often used to communicate with people in the United States are English and Mandarin.

Mrs. T believes that her parents' attitudes towards education and the high value they place on education are responsible for her general outlook toward education. She considers it an advantage to come from a family that firmly values education; her parents had strong commitments towards providing the best of educational opportunities to all their children. Both of her parents were Chinese educated. Her father was well-read and relished telling stories and providing information published in the newspapers to his children. She believes that the example set by her father influenced her habit of reading. Her mother was from a well-to-do family in China and she has received some formal education. She is very supportive of educational pursuits. Although both parents were illiterate in English, they supported her by providing the necessary home environment, encouragement, reminders to do homework, a private tutor to assist her in academic work, guidance on disciplined behavior in school, adequate educational supplies and designating her elder sister and brother to instruct her at home. Her father even placed the responsibility of her passing the Secondary School Entrance Examination on her elder brother and sister. She says, "My father warned them that they bear full responsibility in the event that I failed the examination. My failure means they did not teach me well." She reveals the great concern her father had for her education by relating an unforgettable incident. She says, "He showed his concern by personally sharpening all my pencils and getting all other stationary ready to be taken into the examination hall the next day." She also relates how her father, despite

being illiterate in English, attempted to guide her by using the Chinese method of rote learning and dictation so that he could compare the dictation with the text. Neither of her parents imposed specific aspiration of theirs on her in terms of academics or career.

Working Background

Mrs. T was a tenured teacher in the elementary school for 18 years before migrating to the United States. After completing her preuniversity course, she could not continue her education in the university and had to enter the job market. As she could not secure a permanent job, she taught as a temporary, non-tenured teacher for three years before being offered the teacher training course conducted during the school holidays. She taught multiple subjects and single language subject (Bahasa Malaysia) at the elementary school on various occasions. At the Chinese elementary school where her son studied, she taught Bahasa Malaysia.

After arriving in the United States, she found she was not qualified to teach in public schools. The next best option for her was to work in the preschool. She was offered the post of a preschool teacher on condition she registered for the early childhood education courses at a community college. She has been working in the same day-care in Palo Alto for the past five years and is now the head teacher. Her present job does not give her optimum satisfaction because she is paid by the hour and the fringe benefits are not attractive. In addition, she feels her pay is not commensurate with her responsibilities. The biggest problem she encounters working in the day care

are petty and frivolous complaints from parents. She says, "It is understandable why children are naughty but I cannot understand why some parents are so unreasonable, and it is impossible to get any cooperation from some of them." Some parents are too demanding making unreasonable requests, assuming that teachers are their perfect substitutes for their children. She says, "we can just help them but not to replace them." Mrs. T thinks some of the problems children bring to school are caused by broken homes. Another problem is the lack of team-work from some colleagues. The work is also physically strenuous as the owner does not permit teachers to sit throughout the whole day. As a result, she feels the job is too tiring for her. Mrs. T is considering starting a family day-care of her own because she wants to have the freedom and satisfaction of working for herself. Economically, she needs the extra income to finance her children's college education. Mrs. T has also another plan which is to open a small restaurant.

Socio-economic Status (SES)

In terms of social standing, she feels it was higher in Malaysia than in the United States because a teacher is more respected there. In terms of material possessions, she feels the same in both countries. In terms of the amount of leisure and demands of the work place, life in Malaysia was more relaxing and work in the United States is more demanding. She does not find much difference both in monetary and real income in both countries. This is due to a trade-off between relatively cheap labor in Malaysia with expensive capital goods, and expensive labor in the United States but relatively cheap capital

goods. Initially, when she converted her savings brought over from Malaysia, she has less due to the differential exchange rate.

The only constraint she finds preventing her from moving up to a higher SES is the expenses for her children, which decrease her savings. She thinks it is not possible for her to move to a higher SES at her present job, unless she operates her own business. Upward mobility will have to depend on the children "when they are successful through obtaining higher professional qualifications and lucrative careers." She does not think it advisable to try to improve her SES because it involves opportunity costs such as curtailing her time spent with her children and spending money that should go towards the education of her children. In addition, her economically active life span is shorter as compared to her children's. Hence, she prefers to give her children the opportunity to move to a higher SES. She does not foresee formidable obstructions erected by American government to restrict any particular race or ethnic group from upward mobile.

Mrs. T does not participate in community activities. The reasons are time constraint as well as a lack of interest in community activities that focus on games and picnics. In addition, "After a tiring day's work, the only thought that comes to mind is to take a rest." She will participate in community activities only after she is financially able to afford the time and effort. Furthermore, whatever "free" time she has is spent on household chores during the weekdays or resting during the weekends.

Mrs. T finds she has no time to "go around making friends." Her friends are confined to her colleagues, parents of children in the day care, parents of her children's friends and neighbors. She has few American friends due to the

short length of residence in America, "unlike those who have stayed here 20 or 30 years." Mrs. T mentions it is difficult to have close American friends due to the differences in culture and interests. She says, "Americans usually talk about going on holidays. I don't have the time and money to go for holidays." Another reason for her difficulty is, "Although we speak English, I feel we don't speak their kind of language with the slangs and cultural meanings, we don't know what they are talking about." Hence, she has a few close friends, about five but more casual friends, about 30 to 40.

Attitude Toward Education

Mrs. T believes children should be given and bear certain responsibilities toward education. For instance, before children are old enough to be employed in the world of work, education should be their most important pursuit where they have to devote all their time. However, once they leave school, the pursuit of academic knowledge is less important compared to the social skills of how to get along in society. Creative ability becomes more important than mere academic knowledge. Mrs. T believes the success of a student is dependent on innate as well as learned capability of a child. She expects "each child should do the best s/he is capable of instead of a parent setting a specific goal in life which may be unrealistic for the child to achieve."

Mrs. T strongly believes the purpose of education is to equip children with the necessary skills to perform a job, in addition to training on how to "function as a human being, live harmoniously in society, have a more meaningful life, be happy with oneself, know what is happening around one's

environment and not merely for the sake of acquiring money." Mrs. T believes "if people are educated, they are more likely to acquire wisdom about life, which can help them to be happy in whatever situation. They will not feel they lack something in life." She feels strongly that a person should be educated because "without education, one is lost and ignorant. When in the company of others, you are merely existing without meaning." For Mrs. T, the purpose of education is to "help one solves problems of life easily. One can also be more adept at avoiding troubles, and know how to get out of trouble."

Malaysian and American Systems of Education Compared

In comparing the Malaysian and American systems of education, she lists the following differences and similarities: First, there is "too much emphasis on learning facts from books in the Malaysian education system with preoccupation of what, where, when and how, whereas American education system emphasizes applicability to present and future situations." American class lessons are structured to show how they are connected to the real world.

Second, the Malaysian system of education relies "greatly on textbooks and teachers to impart knowledge while the United States system relies on videos, magazines, experiments, field trips, classmates, modern technology and a great variety of teaching aids which tend to make the lessons more interesting." There is also reliance on other resources like the library, community members, parents and relatives when writing projects.

Third, the quality of education in Malaysia is lower than that in America as the students are taught to absorb and regurgitate facts based on a limited

range of topics, whereas the latter emphasizes high-order thinking skills in a wide range of topics. The American curriculum is very wide though not as deep as the Malaysian curriculum. This makes the curriculum more appropriate to the needs of everyday life.

Fourth, opportunity for higher education in Malaysia is limited for the majority of students with less than five percent of the student population admitted to tertiary education, whereas in America, there is no limit to the number of people wanting tertiary education as long as one is willing and capable of studying. The Malaysian system is more rigid and restrictive as it is strictly age-determined, race-determined, has less freedom of choice of courses and lacks financial aids. She says, "There is no such facilities as student loans from the government agencies or private sectors and the amount of financial grants provided are extremely limited."

Fifth, the class sizes in elementary and secondary schools in Malaysia are too big, about 40-55 students in the elementary grades and 30-40 in secondary grades. Big class size does not lend itself to much interaction between Malaysian teachers and students. However, the students are more obedient, and there is stricter enforcement of discipline without fear of litigation from parents as compared to the American situation.

Sixth, some Malaysian students who are ineligible for free text-book loans or free lunch have to purchase them. They are disqualified due to their parental income, whereas in American schools, all students qualify.

Seventh, Malaysian education does not differentiate between regular and special education students, except those who are blind, deaf, mentally retarded and physically handicapped. All students are educated in regular

education without any special assistance for the learning disabled. She says, "There is no understanding at all of the concept of learning disabilities." Those with learning disabilities are just considered as "stupid" and are grouped into classrooms with low expectations of their passing the public standardized examinations. They are usually taught by lazy and inefficient teachers. The physically handicapped are not as well served as in America due to inadequate funding, poor facilities and shortage of personnel.

Eighth, financial expenditure on a child's education from kindergarten to college is higher in Malaysia than in America. American education is free at the elementary and secondary levels. There is an abundance of scholarship, grants and loans to finance higher education, whereas in Malaysia, although elementary and secondary education is free, preuniversity and university education are not. For parents intending to send their children overseas, the expenditures are high.

Ninth, discipline in Malaysian educational institutions is better as compared to the United States. In American schools, she says, "It is not a matter of students not respecting teachers only, but their friends, parents and adults. Hence, it is not surprising that they don't respect teachers." She attributes the contributory causes to:

the children being given too much freedom to choose what they want to do. They are allowed to do many things they should not be allowed to do, for instance, driving vehicles at an early age, staying late nights, going places, having sex at an early age, getting out of school compound for lunch, improperly dressed to schools, wearing make-up,

using the child abuse laws to threaten parents, teachers and the school system.

Furthermore, she feels "American students are not given adequate homework to do which leaves them plenty of time to roam about having nothing to do except create trouble." She further elaborates how adults spoiled their children, "The parents and teachers are scared to impose too much stress on the students and giving too much homework is considered stressful." Another cause for a lack of discipline in schools may be due to the excessive rights given to youths as defined by the physical, verbal and emotional abuse laws which are used by the youths to "threaten their parents and the parents are intimidated by these laws. Besides this, teachers and principals are also scared of litigation from parents." This makes them helpless to impose any disciplinary actions on the students.

Tenth, the American school curriculum stresses too much on living skills as compared to the Malaysian curriculum, where these skills are supposed to be incorporated in the civics lessons. However, as this civics lesson is not an examination subject, administrators, teachers, parents and students pay no attention to such courses.

Eleventh, American teachers use a variety of teaching methods that are practical in helping students understand their lessons better. Malaysian students are expected to provide answers that the teachers expect based on examination requirements. Teachers in teacher training colleges are not given many teaching strategies to choose from. Furthermore, Malaysian teachers are not as specialized as American teachers, and often they are requested to teach courses in which they are not trained due to a shortage of specialized teachers.

Twelfth, Malaysian teachers have more rights than American teachers. Although corporal punishment meted by teachers is forbidden in Malaysia, it is widely practised. It is tolerated as long as they do not seriously affect the students. Malaysian community believes teachers are reasonable human beings and their good intentions in attempting to discipline students are appreciated. Teachers in Malaysia are free from the fear of legal suits. American teachers are "restricted to talking with the students and even then the teachers have to be careful of the words used, otherwise they will be sued for verbal and psychological abuse. Very often talking does not work."

Thirteenth, peer pressure for students to conform is very strong in America. Many students behave according to the expectations and pressures from their peers, rather than what is good for themselves. However, she finds Malaysian students "do not face such peer pressures except in the areas of trying to outdo each other academically." She says,

The pressure here is on party-going, expensive clothes, outings and having sex early. They create problems for themselves when they fall under such peer pressures. When many students are not wise enough to think on their own, they allowed their peers to shape their lives.

Fourteenth, the grading system in American schools are fairer where grades are given based on projects, research paper, and course assignments, in addition to tests. Extra credits are also given to help students raise their grades. In contrast, grades in Malaysian schools are based solely on examination performance within a specified number of hours. This form of grading tends to create a lot of pressure on students.

Fifteenth, the academic expectations from American parents of their children are low for fear of stressing them too much. "The parents want their children to enjoy their childhood, school and other activities. Grades are not that important." She also notices many parents purposely hold back their children for a year in kindergarten so that they will be more mature and bigger in size in grade one. On the other hand, "Malaysian parents expect a lot from their children, they pressurized them too much. Students are expected to learn three languages and participate in after-school activities such as learning music or after-school tutoring."

Sixteenth, there are significant differences in teacher-student relationship as "American students can regard their teachers as friends, whereas in Malaysia, the relationship is very formal and the students have full respect for teachers but their relationship is not necessarily, close and warm." The Malaysian teachers "take great pride and feel happy when their students perform well academically." American teachers "do not expect much from students, and when the students do well, no credit goes to them but only to the students." American teachers tend to "do less for the students in terms of giving help, whereas Malaysian teachers are more willing to provide assistance." American teachers "regard teaching as fun activities and are very relaxed, whereas Malaysian teachers treat teaching as serious activity."

Seventeenth, school activities in America involve parents and community members such as picnic, walkathon, home-coming games, dances, back to school nights, and parent-teacher conferences. She says, "American parents enjoy participating in such activities, whereas Malaysian parents do not care much for such non-academic activities and seldom participate." The number of

such activities in Malaysian school is very limited and there is no parent-teacher conference and back-to-school night at all.

Eighteenth, there is a distinct difference in school financing: "In the United States, local schools are controlled by the community in terms of funding, election of the board of trustee and generally, parents have more say in the administration and management of schools." In Malaysia, funding, staffing, major decisions regarding school expansion, curriculum, student intake are made by the central authority (government), and the parents have very little say in the running of schools.

Overall, Mrs. T considers the American school system better at inculcating social skills, whereas the Malaysian school system, better at acquiring academic knowledge. In America, she says,

While it is appropriate and important to pay close attention to social skills, problem-solving and self-esteem of the students, other efforts and time are also expended on distractions like teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, gangs, guns, and drugs which do not add much to the academic knowledge of students.

Compatibility of the American System of Education to Children's Needs

In examining the compatibility of the American system of education to Mrs. T's needs, she says, "What I like about the American system of education is, the curriculum is wider. In Malaysia, choice of courses is limited and everybody has to do the same thing." She feels as a result of the different levels of difficulty in the courses and the relaxed nature of studying in American

schools, her children enjoy their education here. They are not subjected to indirect pressure from their peers' preoccupation with competition and teachers' high expectations for one student to outdo the other, as in Malaysia. In Malaysia, students' performance at public examinations is taken as a barometer of the teachers' efficiency, diligence, commitment, ability and capability. Mrs. T feels "the intense competition generated towards scoring at examinations deflects the general purpose of education and this affects my children's love for learning in Malaysia."

She finds the condition of discipline in American schools not compatible to her children's needs. This is exacerbated by the absence of respect for teachers, peers, parents and adults by community members. This could be influenced by the practice of "teaching the children here to care about themselves too much." Another aspect she finds incompatible is too much emphasis on self-right and self-welfare. She feels there should be a value system to impart a sense of caring for the well-being of others, even though it may mean sacrificing for others so that others may benefit. Mrs. T speculates that in the future, based on present trend of student behavior and the general social policies, students are going to become "lazier, behave like spoiled children, and to become more irresponsible."

Despite some negative aspects of the American school system and society, her children prefer to study here because the atmosphere for learning is more relaxed and is free from excessive academic pressure. On the other hand, Wern suffers from bullying by American students. Wern is not making many American friends due partly to their rejection of him. She perceives the causes of rejection by American students are racial and cultural differences,

compounded by a lack of discipline in schools. She thinks the small build of Asian students makes her son an easy target for "physical bullying." Another contributing factor could be the nature of the popular sports and games Americans play, which require height and strength which automatically "sidelined" Asian students. The rejection by American students resulted in Wern having friends mainly from the same ethnic group. She considers this as a natural coping strategy, although not a laudable one. Wern has a limited "social life in school and he does not appear to be enjoying it." She notices that Wern sometimes "even feared to go to school" because he could not obtain satisfactory assistance from teachers and principal on reported bullying. She thinks the principal's and teachers' inability to assist are a consequence of their own helplessness or indifference. Furthermore, differences in cultural perceptions of what are permissible physical threats, bullying, or abusive and offensive comments may explain partially the unwillingness of administrators to take action. There is also confusion and differences in perceptions of what are considered basic freedoms between mainstream Americans and Asians. This has a noticeable effect on Wern. Her son's different reactions to returning to school after a long school vacation in Malaysia as compared to his reaction in American schools were evident. In Malaysia, her son was "excited and longed to return to school to meet his old classmates, but unfortunately, not in America." She cites an unpleasant incident where three American students ganged up to have "fun" at Wern's expense. They poked their fingers into his hamburgers. This was brought to the attention of the disciplinary teacher after he (Wern) had accidentally knocked one of the students in the mouth during the course of a struggle. The outcome was that Wern and the other students had to apologize

to each other. She feels there was no objective effort to find out who caused the incident.

In attempting to help her son cope with social problems in school, Mrs. T consults other parents about what appropriate action to take in America. Advising her son to bring complaints to the discipline master was another coping strategy. She also encourages her son to make more friends and to learn how to "take certain jokes easy, and if cannot be avoided, to just let go." Encouraging her son to become insensitive to certain jokes was also suggested. Furthermore, she has also written to the counsellor and met with her personally when Wern's assignment paper was snatched and crumpled by another student for no apparent reason. "The discipline master and the counsellor called the parent to the office. The only thing the parent did was just to admit they cannot control their son." Mrs. T also employs psychological rationalizing to help her son cope with other students' perception that he is a "freak" when he does not like to participate in dancing parties or staying out late with friends. She says, "I advised my son that it is all right to be different and to follow what your instincts, temperament and personality tell you."

Mrs. T expects her son will pursue "at the minimum, a college undergraduate education, and whether he will pursue further or enter into the world of work is his choice." She prefers to leave the choice of career to her son but insists there is no compromise on a college education. Mrs. T reveals Wern thinks he wants to pursue a legal career, while the second wants to be a cartoon animator and the youngest, a doctor. She does not have any qualms that all her three sons will be able to successfully complete their college education but is "worried that socially whether they can deal with the different

cultural mannerisms and patterns of life, and to be able to get along with their colleagues."

Impact of American Values on Education

With her short experience of American life for the past five years, Mrs. T feels that American values have influenced her traditional values in a number of ways. First, she feels she is able to assert her right more without having to feel whether "it is nice or not to do so." This is attributed to American laws protecting such exertion of personal rights, which is in opposite to that in Malaysia where the exertion of personal rights has to be subjected to laws regarding "sensitive" issues pertaining to race and religion. For Chinese Malaysians, the Confucian way of female behavior dictates that they should not be blunt, abrasive or aggressive. The outcome of this is, "I learn how to talk more bluntly and there is no such things as not 'nice' [considerate assessment of whether certain utterances prior to saying them will hurt the feelings of others] to say certain things." She adds, "What you feel is more important than what others feel." When in Malaysia, she says, she "has to refrain from saying something which may hurt others but here, you can say what you like." Second, she reveals in her work place she has also learned how to "tell whatever you are not happy with to the employer. But there is still one thing I find difficult to do. That is, to ask for a raise in pay." This change of attitude is due to the assumption in America that "if you do not express your feelings, then everything is okay, like for example, if you do not say that you have no money, others will think that you are rich." Third, she finds a great difference in the interpersonal relationship

among people. For instance, she cites the case of visiting someone who has fallen ill, being invited to a marriage or some other social occasions, the American people usually "do not buy things (as gifts) for others." Fourth, she finds personal traits like "modesty" or "shyness" do not apply. "If you have done something special or even ordinary, you have to tell the others what you have done." She contrasts this with her cultural background that if one were to do this, one would be considered "boastful" and "arrogant." Fifth, Mrs. T thinks she has become more independent in decision-making and performs many chores that she did not have to do in Malaysia. This is due to her position as head teacher in her place of work and the general American attitude that whatever decision one makes, there is "no one right or wrong" decision. Sixth, she feels American society provides greater opportunity for upward socially mobility through diligence and dedication to work.

Of those American values that Mrs. T finds conflicting with her personal value is the concept of "sacrificing my needs so that others are happy. Here, I have to learn that I have to come first and to place others second." Second, another conflicting value is in the education of children, particularly on the aspect of discipline and respect. She finds "there is too little or no respect of children for adults or of one person for another which contributes to the lack of discipline." Third, the value of permissiveness where the children are given too many "rights" to do as they like and the too liberal interpretation of the laws of child abuse. This imposed a sense of helplessness and resignation on adults to discipline their children. When applied to adults, permissiveness encourages them to take advantage of the welfare system through voluntary unemployment, while the criminal system is soft on crime. "The criminal system sometimes

appears to be a 'reward' system of free food, lodging, and entertainment."

Fourth, the concept of marriage is primarily for the convenience of two individuals and not taken as a serious, lifetime human relationship as evidenced by the high rate of divorce.

There are a number of values in the American system that she admires and finds them complementing her values like the greater equality in opportunities, reward for hard work, democracy, more practical and just laws, freedom from tyranny and oppressive government.

Mrs. T finds she has also to make accommodations rather than either total rejection or adoption of certain values in life. For example, she has to become less "strict" with her children and to give them more decision-making power, thus contradicting the more traditional Chinese code of family life. Also, she has to learn to be "more casual in her attitude toward colleagues which comes at the expense of inculcating a close relationship, although this is not what I want. For example, if I try to care and want to know more about my colleague, I will be regarded as a busy-body." As a consequence, she finds that she is forced to "keep her distance" and "be very careful of what I say or just to keep quiet."

Reaction to Allegations for Some Minority Students' Failure

When asked about allegations made by some minority parents that certain school factors such as teachers' prejudice, school curriculum, teachers' lack of cultural awareness, gender bias, and instructional incompatibilities caused some children to do poorly in school, Mrs. T considers them not relevant

to her children's academic performance. She feels her children are used to working under an atmosphere of intense competition and greater workload in Malaysian schools. She believes strongly "when a student is not doing well, it is because s/he is not working hard enough; after all, everyone has the same amount of intelligence." The allegations put forward are considered by her as "scapegoating." She believes the main reason is personal diligence.

Bilingual Education

Having been a teacher in Malaysia prior to migrating to the United States, Mrs. T is aware of what bilingual education is and feels regretful there is no provision of Mandarin-bilingual education in her children's school district. She will enrol her children in a bilingual program, if available, in order to help maintain their culture, be literate in an extra language, be able to communicate with grandparents and relatives and be of use in commercial transactions with China. She says, "I absolutely support bilingual education and I can find no reason at all why a student of average intelligence cannot function in two languages. In Malaysia, a student has to study three languages."

Gender Issue

Mrs. T finds that preference for males over females is still evident among some Chinese in Malaysia, though not to the same extent as it was 40 or 50 years ago. She considers this preference to be due to the cultural practice of the Chinese that only males can inherit the last name of the family, and once a

female is married to another family, she assumes the last name of the husband's family. She feels when this is built into the social mores of the Chinese, it became discriminatory. Furthermore, the males are expected to be the breadwinner of the family and hence, hold a preferred position. The males also assume the responsibility to look after elderly parents. Mrs. T feels this is a part of Chinese society, and it is difficult to change the practice. However, she feels she is not willing to "take the trouble to change this cultural practice." She prefers to leave the task to time, "I don't have a choice and I don't want to think about it for it is not worth the while." She feels only the reality of a changing economic, educational and social conditions of a country can bring about a gradual change. She has seen many such changes, for instance, the practice of giving away baby daughters for adoption, even to non-Chinese, free of charge in Malaysia in the early 40s and 50s. However, for the last two decades, even if a childless Chinese couple wanted to buy a Chinese female baby, there were none for "sale," due to changing economic and social conditions in Malaysia. Chinese couples are postponing marriage due to higher education, postponing giving birth due to career demands and family planning. Baby girls are valued more now than ever before because of their greater concern and innate feelings of love for parents. Both sexes are given opportunity to be educated to as high a level as possible in Malaysia and some Chinese females are also sent overseas by their parents for further education. Malaysian Chinese females have progressed tremendously, when compared to those in traditional China, where females could not even go to school.

According to Mrs. T, this gender bias is translated into practice in the following ways. First, it is socially "acceptable" that a mother or father can live

with the son and daughter-in-law but not with the son-in-law. In many cases, parents would feel ashamed as the daughter has already been married out. This may also reflect the incapability of the son to look after them. Based on Mrs. T's own experience, she says her mother is reluctant to live with her unless there is a great need for her assistance in looking after her grandchildren. "My mother prefers to stay in my brother's house as she feels more comfortable and to avoid any conflict with my mother-in-law." Mrs. T has first hand evidence of this uncomfortable situation when the mother-in-law of one of her sisters resorts to hinting that she (Mrs. T's mother) should live with her son when in fact she (Mrs. T's mother) was trying to help her daughter cope with three small children.

Second, the male inherits all property and wealth of the family. Again, in Mrs. T's case the house her father left behind is for both her brothers to share.

Third, her mother gave money to her brother to purchase a house while none of her sisters was given such privilege. In addition, Mrs. T was told by her mother that when her (Mrs. T's) eldest sister was born, her paternal grandfather, on hearing that it was a girl, "just went off to sleep, but when her eldest brother was born, the grandfather immediately took the trouble to look into the almanac to decide a name for the grandson, ordered the cooking of chicken for her mother and started preparing a celebration for relatives and neighbors." She was also told by her mother that in China, when her (Mrs. T) grandfather took her eldest sister for a walk, "neighbors laughed and made fun of him." While in Malaysia, Mrs. T's family had to wait for her father to return home before starting to eat their meal. Her mother bestows more pride in her brothers, often using them as a topic of conversation far more often than girls. In addition, her brothers need not have to perform any housework.

Fourth, in Malaysia, when a male fails the public standardized examination, he will be enrolled in a private school to continue his education but when a daughter fails, her education is terminated. This happens because the parents want to give the male a second chance and also private schools require financial expenses.

Fifth, Mrs. T knows of a few cases where the husband and mother-in-law used the excuse of the wife for not giving birth to a son, to marry a second wife or to keep a mistress. This inability to produce a son was cited as one of the "legitimate" reasons, among others, in traditional China to marry a second wife. Mrs. T relates an incident to show gender bias. She had just given birth to her third son in a private hospital and she expressed her disappointment (for she preferred a girl) to the next-bed lady who had also just delivered her baby. The lady said, "You have three boys but nobody (meaning in-laws, relatives and friends) complains but if, on the other hand, you have three girls, you will get a lot of headache and "pressure." Here, it is you who do not like it but not the others." Mrs. T cites another example of her friend, after giving birth to three girls, did not get any present from her husband and relatives. When she gave birth to a boy on her fourth attempt, her husband presented her a car and the mother-in-law, an acre of land, jewellery and money.

Her mother's gender bias is "due to her being brought up in a gender-biased society in China. I don't want to change her thinking. I'll just let it be and there is no necessity for me to be bothered by such thinking." Mrs. T feels at least her "mother does not oppose all my sisters having as high an education as they possibly can achieve and this represents an improvement as compared to earlier times." She states, "my mother is more conscious of the gender divide

than my father. He treated both the boys and girls the same when he was alive."

Comparison of Gender Issues in Malaysia and America

In comparing the treatment of females in the United States to those in Malaysia, Mrs. T feels there is less discrimination here, "Even if there is discrimination, it occurs mostly at the individual rather than at the societal level. This is because there are laws against gender discrimination." She attributes the low incidence of gender discrimination to cultural practice and the economically advanced stage of the country. American females have greater opportunity for education and this tends to enable them to be independent economically and to form pressure groups to fight for their rights. In Malaysia, occupational roles are still quite traditionally defined where women work exclusively as nurses, day-care givers, and secretaries. Besides this, a women working in business are perceived to be of less consequence because of the cultural prejudice against them. Society gives "more respect to men than women and the thinking that men are better than women." More Chinese males are sent overseas for higher education than females.

In terms of social rights, Mrs. T finds American men participate more in taking care of children and doing household chores than Chinese men in Malaysia. In American schools, no student is excluded from courses based on sex, such as cookery and industrial workshop. In America, both boys and girls inherit property and wealth from their parents, both husband and wife can divorce each other, and in a divorce, women have a fifty percent share in all

assets. In Malaysia, Mrs. T says, "It is very rare for a wife to divorce a husband because society will put her at a disadvantage. It is also difficult for a widow or a divorcee to remarry while there is no similar difficulty for a divorced man."

Chinese females in the United States have more equal educational opportunities, more equal chance of success as men, even in certain professions that they are discriminated against. Furthermore, there are more professions for Chinese women to choose from. American Chinese women gain benefits from the various laws enacted to protect women, and they are free from the constraints of traditional social and cultural practices in Malaysia, that tend to put women at a disadvantage.

Mrs. T believes girls should be given equal educational opportunity. She finds the situation in America more conducive for girls to progress than in Malaysia: "if a female pursues higher education there are certain consequences like delayed marriage, delayed motherhood and delayed joy of having a family." When a female works, she is also deprived of spending more time with her children "during the children's critical years of growing up." However, American females have more liberty at making decisions and choices for themselves and are more independent economically. Mrs. T feels that they have a wider choice of occupations and the "society can get the best out of both sexes, which is good for the country and society, although some men may not like it." She believes there are women who are better at their jobs than the men, whether in traditional or non-traditional careers.

Adjustment to American Society/Culture

Although this is the first trip for Mrs. T out of the country, she encounters minimal adjustment problems. This could be due to the fact that she stayed with her sister for the first few months in America and the psychological preparedness for the past eight years.

American and Chinese Culture Compared

Mrs. T finds there are differences and similarities in the Malaysian and American ways of life. One difference is the parent-child relationship. The manner of parental expression of love for their children is different. "Parents in Malaysia will go all out to help their children, by selling houses and land to finance their education, while American parents will help up to a certain limit, and when they go to college, the amount of money provided is limited."

A second aspect in parent-child relationship is that, when an American parents grow old they do not want to live with their children and the children do not want their parents to live with them either. She adds, "Even when they love each other, they don't stay together." In Malaysia, Chinese live in extended families. She finds it so difficult to understand American parents, for instance, she has a colleague who wanted to go home for Thanksgiving, but needed \$40.00 for air-fare. Her parents refused to pay for her. Typically, a Chinese parent will immediately accede to her request.

Third, she expresses her amazement at her American colleague telling her that her mother-in-law pays her for cutting and perming her hair. "It is absurd

and where is a sense of "family"? In this situation, a Chinese daughter-in-law will be happy to do it free for her mother-in-law."

Fourth, Americans are very fond of expressing the words, "I love you" but finds it difficult to witness it in action. She quotes an instance of her colleague's father who died recently, "He donated all his seven million dollars to a Flying Recreation Club and not a dollar to any of his seven children who have to live in rented or mortgaged houses."

Fifth, Mrs. T says,

I find it so amusing that parents have to ask for permission to visit their children's home or to make appointment before going there. For Chinese family, it is taken for granted that the children's home is the parents' home and vice-versa. There is no demarcation of ownership.

Sixth, there is a system of respect for elders and authority among Chinese. American children do not use respectful addresses when talking to adults, and they call adults by names. The Chinese use a system of addresses like "uncle", "aunt", "brother", etc. so as not to sound rude.

Seventh, American children "are taught too much to stand up for their individual rights and do what they want. This backfires on the parents when they start to think of themselves." Malaysian Chinese children are taught "to think of others first before self, which is totally opposite here."

Eighth, there is a great difference in the perception of what constitutes shame. She has witnessed many American unmarried teenage mothers on welfare, and they are proud of it. She says, "They even go to the extent of complaining that the money given by welfare is insufficient. This is a disgrace. If you do not have the means to support yourself, then do not have children."

Ninth, Mrs. T feels that somehow she cannot get close to American friends as there are "too many rules of relationship that are too formal." Furthermore, she finds it difficult to judge the dividing line between private and public domain for Americans. There are many social norms that are different, such as, it is bad manners to ask "personal" questions, friends refusing to talk over the phone, even for a minute to find out the purpose of the call when they have something to do, or when American friend has a guest in the house, they "won't entertain you at all." Mrs. T finds the social etiquette too "distant and cold," whereas in Malaysia, the social etiquette seems to be "close and warm with more human feelings." The social conventions seem to inhibit her from "feeling close" to American friends. She is still not used to the habit of hugging and kissing on the cheeks with American friends and tries to avoid it. Mrs. T cites another example at the dinner table, there are too many social rules governing the use of the correct types of spoons, glass, plates and "above all, nothing much to eat." To her, Malaysian dinner is less formal and there is more food to eat. Mrs. T also finds Americans like to joke and laugh, so much so that she finds it uneasy "thinking whether they are laughing at you or at the situation."

When Mrs. T first arrived in the United States, she did not experience culture shock since she was quite well-informed of the overall aspects of American society. Her very first experience of the cultural difference was when her son wanted to sit on his American cousin sister's couch. She refused to let him sit, and her mother commented (Mrs. T's sister) that her daughter has a right of refusal as she bought the couch with her own money. She finds this as her

first experience of the vast cultural differences. This kind of attitude is unheard of in Malaysia.

Coping with Differences

To cope with cultural differences, Mrs. T uses a variety of strategies ranging from ignoring some completely to adopting the new wholeheartedly, depending on the rationality of the situation or her intuition. For example, as she finds there are too many social conventions to observe in an American dinner, she avoids attending dinner or going to parties whenever she can. She says, "It is too much of a hassle to pay so much attention on how to eat and after all, I don't particularly like American food." Mrs. T takes a cautious path to avoid any misunderstanding, unpleasantness or verbal quarrel by engaging in as little conversation as possible with Americans, unless it is absolutely necessary or when she is completely certain she is not going to offend the other parties. However, she cautions, "This does not mean that I have no American friends to joke to in my work place." She has to be very selective and to observe carefully the personalities of the person she speaks to. She clarifies she has to strike a balance between others perceiving her to be "anti-social" and being too "loose-mouthed." Mrs. T has adopted the American manner of conversation by being straight-forward and "blunt." Mrs. T discusses her problems she encounters with her husband and children often as a coping strategy as well as a topic of conversation, especially during dinner time.

Mrs. T observes that her adolescent children do not participate much in the normal social activities of American children like attending dancing parties,

going out with girlfriends, frequent visits to the movies and staying out late. As a consequence, Mrs. T notices her adolescent children do not have a wide circle of American friends. Their close friends are confined to Asian classmates. Mrs. T encourages her adolescent children to make more friends, but not through activities like staying out late night, dressing up shabbily or in baggy pants or succumbing to undesirable peer pressures such smoking, drinking or indulging in teenage sex. She says,

I don't mind so much if they don't follow mainstream activities that are undesirable and these activities are not what I want to encourage them to do. These are not something they will miss. Between them joining in undesirable activities and not making new friends at all, the latter choice is better.

Mrs. T considers activities such as participating in school trips, going to movies once in a while, playing games, eating out and having picnics healthy which she likes her children to pursue. She thinks these interests are determined by personality type. In terms of religious belief, Mrs. T advises her adolescent children to "avoid talking about it until they are more educated and matured. Right now, they are to concentrate on differentiating what is right and wrong but not through the medium of any religion." On the issue of race and ethnicity, Mrs. T advises her children to be aware of the issues, and when making friends "to look at the individuals as human beings are all the same basically. They should deal with one-on-one and not on the basis of ethnicity or race." On social issues like smoking, drugs, and sex, Mrs. T reveals "there is no compromise on this and advises them to avoid this at all costs or until they are matured enough to make their decisions." On small issues of life like who to make friends with,

whether to go to social gathering or not, what to read, or who to invite to the house, she expects them to be able to make their own decision and usually allows them to do so, as long as she is informed. The prevalent social issues facing American society are frequently discussed among family members. She often reminds "the children that there are problems everywhere but the most vital issue is not the problems, but how to solve them." She has often suggested to her children to "ignore the problems or confront them and when confronting them, they have to make sure that they are in the right."

Positive and Negative Aspects of American Culture

Having had the advantage of living in two different cultures, Mrs. T finds there are many aspects of American culture she wants to emulate and others to reject. The first positive aspect of American culture she admires is the various forms of freedom--freedom of the press and expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religious beliefs, freedom to practise whatever cultures one wishes without any fear of persecutions. Second, the politeness adult Americans show to each other such as wishing each other "good morning", "thank you" and other positive words of encouragement and support. Third, the positive outlook in life and in dealing with friends and other people. She says, "The American people have the 'can do' attitude and give a lot of praises to what one has done, even though the product is not good." Fourth, the ability of the Americans to practise self-restraint and not to show their true feelings of anger or frustrations like during times of disagreement. Fifth, Americans have good self-poise and self-confidence in what they do, "even in something that they are not certain of, but

will maintain the attitude of being confident." She cites as example in asking others for directions, "Even if they are not sure they will be able to tell you confidently where your destination is. They do not like to admit they do not know or are not sure." Sixth, the practice of punctuality is praiseworthy without wasting unnecessary time. This aspect of American life is in total agreement with Mrs. T's own habit and belief in punctuality as she has never been late for work even once in the past five years of work in America. Seventh, Mrs. T appreciates the way Americans "take life more easily; enjoy life more and to worry less about the future." Furthermore, she finds the Americans not so "materialistic and are less money-conscious. They do things because they like it, rather than how much money one is going to make." She finds Americans value relaxation and leisure, which are good for reducing tensions in life. Finally, she thinks every Chinese men should emulate American men "doing a lot of household chores like taking care of children, bathing them, cooking, doing laundry and cleaning the house. You could hardly find Chinese men so willing to do such chores."

On the other hand, Mrs. T also finds numerous American cultural practices she disagrees with. First, is the lack of respect for elders, parents, teachers and adults by children. Second, the problem of divorce. She says, "In America, it is okay to divorce even for slight differences. Marriage is taken too lightly and don't seem to be important." Third, permissiveness with regards to sex which she thinks is the main cause for many social ills like AIDS, teenage pregnancy, adultery, rapes, crimes, multiple sex partners and welfare dependency. Fourth, the desire to be different from others which is caused by individualism: "Americans just want to be different and to try something new

regardless of whether it is for the better or worse. They want to be different for the sake of being different." She thinks "extreme individualism causes selfishness to just think of one's right and happiness." This, she feels, made one have less feelings for others in terms of "human obligations" which is a very important part of human relationship among the Chinese. Tied to the concept of individualism is the concept of sacrifice. Mrs. T says,

American should learn to sacrifice a bit of themselves for the happiness of others, like for the children. When the children are happy, you will also be happy. Don't think the other way around, that if you love me you should be happy for me, even what I do will cause you unhappiness. In Chinese culture, other people's happiness is more important than my own happiness.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese Culture

Mrs. T feels there are certain aspects of the Chinese culture that are positive which she would never discard and some she would readily want to reject. The first positive aspect is respect for elders. Second, the unity in the family where every member is nurtured to have a sense of belongingness, caring, and sacrifice for the family. The third aspect is the value of diligence where success can only be reaped after great effort and struggle as embodied in the Chinese saying, "To taste bitterness first before the sweetness of success." Fourth, Chinese should retain their names which are meaningful, a symbol of their self-identity and self-pride in themselves, and not to discard just for the sake of Americanizing their names to suit the linguistic difficulty of

pronunciation by others. She says, "In fact, I have come across many Americans who enquired of other Chinese why they do not have Chinese names, and commented that it is a pity they do not have them."

The first aspect of the Chinese culture Mrs. T feels they should reject is the concept of gender discrimination against female. She is happy to note it is undergoing gradual change among Malaysian Chinese as well as in America. Second, Chinese should be strongly united as a family unit rather than as an ethnic or racial group. Third, avoid narrow-mindedness, and become less arrogant in "rejecting outright every aspect of other people's way of life or thinking. There are things we can learn from others." Fourth, the regard for wealth or "money as the most important tool of power. Money has been equated to intelligence, capability and success." Fifth, "the practice of gambling in all forms which appears to preoccupy and ruin the lives of many Chinese should be rejected."

Generational Conflict

Mrs. T finds that there has not been any differences of opinion between her and her adolescent children that are so deep as to constitute a generational conflict. She considers, by American standard, her adolescent children obedient, as they do not engage in smoking cigarettes or doing drugs, staying out late at night, joining gangs, engaging in wild sex parties or any other form of adolescent delinquencies. Generally, she considers her children respectful and responsible. She adds, "I am satisfied with the way they are behaving and are doing well in their school work."

Racial Discrimination

Mrs. T enumerates the following forms of discrimination practised in Malaysia, some of which she has suffered personally. First, she was denied admission to the university because of her race despite having better examination results than other successful candidates. Second, she could not obtain admission to teacher training colleges even with a Higher School Certificate (pre-university qualification) and has to be employed as a temporary teacher for three years. Third, promotion in the teaching profession was also determined by race. Although she had been teaching for 18 years in Malaysia, she was not promoted but more "junior" Malay teachers were. Fourth, the continuous utterances of racist remarks by Malay politicians, civil servants and ordinary people are above the laws while the same utterances by non-Malays are considered seditious.

Mrs. T realizes there are some discrimination in the work place in America, such as the "glass ceiling" or other subtly disguised actions that appear to be non-discriminatory. She advises her children not to be handicapped by such practices in America. Comparatively speaking, racial and religious discrimination is far more prevalent in Malaysia than in America. She feels some form of discrimination in the labor market is inevitable due "to human weaknesses" and would like her children "to focus on how to overcome discrimination rather than complaining." This fact does not seem to have any adverse effect on her children's academic work. She advises them to pursue work where they "can be their own boss rather than depending on others."

Mrs. T acknowledges she has not experienced personally any discrimination to the same magnitude in America, as in Malaysia and wishes she need not have to go through the agony of such bigotry. Mrs. T differentiates some basic differences in discriminatory practices. She says, "In Malaysia, ethnic discrimination is sanctioned by law and the criticisms against such discrimination is unlawful. In addition, no one can challenge such discrimination in the courts of law." Hence, Mrs. T. concludes, "Opposition and criticisms of racial laws are considered criminal, while the practice is not." Second, in Malaysia, Mrs. T has no recourse to justice of such racial discrimination except to internalize the dissatisfaction and hatred of such laws and to vent her frustrations with family members and close friends. But in America, Mrs. T believes "there are less racial discrimination because of laws promulgated to forbid such acts and an aggrieved person can seek and often obtain justice from the courts." Third, Americans have a strong sense of shame, as well as a sense of justice.

In considering what actions she could take to help reduce racial or ethnic discrimination in America, Mrs. T suggests, "All Americans should be aware of the different cultures in America because the principal cause of racial discrimination is ignorance. When people are informed, they will be able to understand each other." Similarly, she says, "Chinese should not discriminate against other races, especially Mexicans and Blacks. We should also learn their way of life, their language and culture so as to understand them." Mrs. T feels it her personal duty through informal conversation with colleagues and friends to inform them of the Chinese culture and way of life. She suggests

another means of creating more understanding among different ethnic and racial groups through exposure and interactions of children in schools.

In times of "culture clash" or when her children are confronted with prejudice, Mrs. T expects her children to assess the situation for themselves to see whether the differences involve matters of principle. If the "culture clash" demands them to condemn their own principles or core culture, she expects them to "fight for their values and not to sacrifice them for material gains." She wants them to be "practical and to be able decide to what extent they should sacrifice." She feels America is "big enough to tolerate and accommodate differences."

Mrs. T does not want her children to abandon their culture in order to be successful in American society. She believes "America is too great a nation to demand such petty sacrifice on the part of minorities to be cultureless." She has informed her children that "they can only drop their culture voluntarily, but not as a condition for material benefits. They should not reject their own culture based on what others say." Mrs. T feels culture is a person's identity which gives him/her a sense of personhood. She says, "If a person has no identity, s/he is a formless person, drifting aimlessly. Chinese Americans need not have to forsake their culture as White Americans need not have to forsake theirs when they first landed in America."

Gains and Losses from Migration

In recounting the gains and losses from immigrating to America, Mrs. T lists the most important gain as the opening of a world of educational

opportunities for her children. Generally, they have a wide choice of college and major to pursue on a fair, competitive basis, free from racial quotas. She says, "My children have the opportunity to go as far as they can based on their ability, without government laws set to prevent them from progressing as in Malaysia." She hopes affirmative action based on ethnic origin in America will not result in wanton reverse discrimination.

Second, the opportunity for her children to "choose the country to settle down permanently." She feels she has discharged her responsibility as a parent in providing them the alternative, knowing well that there is no future for them in Malaysia.

Third, her children have the opportunity to experience personally what American democracy means and how it functions in one of the most advanced countries in the world. She says, "They have the chance to experience how the American country is governed, managed and administered."

Fourth, the opportunity to experience intercultural mix in California, which can be considered as the most multiracial and multi-ethnic place in the world.

In migrating to America, Mrs. T feels her greatest loss is leaving behind family members and friends. She says, "The greatest sacrifice I made is to lose the bonding with them. This is the sacrifice I have to make for the sake of my children's future." The second loss is sacrificing a "familiar, easier and relaxing lifestyle in Malaysia." The third loss is giving up a "stable and established career for uncertain ones in America." She explains, "Civil servants in Malaysia are guaranteed life-long pension and free health services."

Model Minority

Mrs. T acknowledges she is aware of the model minority label as applied to Chinese in America. By model minority she takes it to mean the Chinese are well-off economically and in the field of education, "they are doing extremely well." She believes the reasons for this label is due to the Chinese characteristics of being "more productive, hardworking, trustworthy, responsible and generally, do not abuse the welfare system. Chinese children are not causing disciplinary problems in schools and they are able to perform well academically." She adds, "The Chinese are self-dependent and don't need financial help from the government, if they are able to stand on their own." She feels this label is a complement to the Chinese and are often quoted as example for other minority to follow. She relates how her boss has often told her that "she respects the Chinese and never has any bad debts from the parents. She likes to have Chinese children in her day-care as they are reasonable, do not give problems, make less complaints and do not file legal suits." Mrs. T feels the Chinese have been "recognized by the mainstream Americans as being more capable and trustworthy."

Reasons Chinese Students are Excelling in Schools

Mrs. T lists various reasons which she thinks contribute to the success of the Chinese students in schools. The first reason is the willingness to work hard. Second, they are a more practical people. Third, the practice of thrift and the habit of planning their budget carefully to avoid overspending and

indebtedness. They are able to forego enjoyment of luxuries if they cannot afford them. Fourth, the habit of independence and self-reliance. Fifth, a stable and "good family background for the students. They are encouraged to study hard by every member of the family from siblings to grandparents and are provided assistance by their extended family such as cousins, aunts and uncles." Family members act as support group and as models for the younger children to emulate. Sixth, "leisure and merry-making are not as important to life when compared to the Americans." They spend less time partying, holidaying, hanging around doing nothing or engaging in activities that are unrelated to academics. Children tend to obtain satisfaction and probably, fun as well from studying and being able to perform well academically in schools. The children realized that doing well in school will please their parents and can contribute to the happiness of the family. She says, "Academic attainment of the children has become part and parcel of the family goal of life."

On the other hand, Mrs. T is aware there are failures among the Chinese population in general and Chinese students in schools. She attributes the failure principally to individual deficiencies. She says, "Some of the Chinese failures are due to laziness and they have no one to blame but themselves." Second, she acknowledges there are some who failed as a result of not having strong enough will power to fight against peer pressure in school and as a result, "join the bad crowd. It is always easier to join them than to fight against them." Third, there are some Chinese students who immigrated here without their parents and extended family. Hence, they do not have home support and as a result, are more likely to make wrong decisions with regards to their goals in life. Fourth, there are parents who are too indulgent and tend to "spoil their

children by giving and letting them do whatever they like. They have succumbed to the permissive society." Fifth, there are some Chinese parents and students who assumed that as America is an advanced country, everything in America is good in terms of behavior, ways of life, permissiveness, forthrightness, parent-child relationship and other aspects of American culture which they copied blindly. When they follow the negative aspects of the American culture, they landed themselves in trouble. Last, Mrs. T states, from her experience as a teacher, that "not everyone has the same ability to do well academically."

Impact of "Model Minority" Status

The label evokes varied reactions among different people. Mrs. T feels the "label is to a great extent the acknowledgement by mainstream society, that Chinese Americans are viewed in favorable light." She says, "The label serves as a model for bilingual students, ESL students and economically poor students, that it is possible for one to move forward. The younger generations may not realize now but will be able to in future." She is also aware some students may "get mad when they are stereotyped or feel disappointed when they are not classified as the model minority." However, she concludes that overall, it is more of a positive than negative label.

Mrs. T reveals her eldest son is aware of the label and he does not care much about it. She recalls her son was not happy with this stereotype causing his counsellor to draw wrong conclusion about him. She relates Wern was certain the counselor assumed "as he is a Chinese, he must be good in

Mathematics, and therefore, is interested in engineering." Mrs. T speculates the implications of the "model minority" label for her children:

if they fall in the category of the "model minority" they will feel proud and if outside, they will feel sad. They might even be disappointed with themselves. However, if they are not included in the label, they will push themselves to strive harder so that they can be included in the category.

Mrs. T reveals her children are not treated differently in any overt ways as a result of this label and neither were they given special privileges. She says, "They were just treated like any other students." On the other hand, Mrs. T thinks the label applies only to certain aspects of academics as there are many "Chinese students are not good in sports and games, poor in English and verbal skills and are good only in Math and Science."

Mrs. T says her children do not experience any problems with this label and if her children find this problematic, she will encourage them to "prove it right and achieve it."

The Future

For her future career, Mrs. T has plans to either operate a family day-care of her own or to engage in restaurant business. She distinguishes between involving in work that brings in monetary income and one that does not. She says, "In the event that I'm financially stable, I would like to engage in activities I like and not with a view to earning an income. However, as long as I am working for monetary returns, I want to work for higher income." She feels she does not want to do what she is doing at present for a career.

She does not foresee she can derive any benefit from further academic study, and she prefers to let the children do that. She says, "I'm too old to study and the rewards from further academic or professional qualifications are not too attractive and not worth the effort, time and money. I have to be realistic, considering my age." As for her retirement, Mrs. T has no plans for it. Her retirement plan will depend on where her children want to "strike roots and pursue their career, whether in the United States or somewhere else in this world." She adds, "Probably, I'll spend my time looking after grandchildren." As for community involvement, she replies she has no plan yet. In terms of the future trend of societal changes in the United States, she finds it hard to speculate with any certainty. She feels if the present American society is "at its worst" in terms of loss of human values, broken homes, senseless crimes, drugs addiction, and the government system that pamper and encourage irresponsibility of some people, then it cannot deteriorate any further. She feels the society should be "changing for the better." She relates, "The government has spoilt the people and when it (the government) realizes this, actions will be taken and the people will be forced to shape up. The government cannot afford to spoil the people as it has no money."

As for her children's future career, Mrs T expresses her optimism and confidence in the following words,

If they work hard, they'll be able to achieve what they want to be.

Although there may be some discrimination, and if they are willing to fight hard, they will be able to get what they want. The discrimination in America is not that bad and they should be able to overcome and fight for

their rights. The law here is against discrimination as compared to Malaysia where the government is for racial discrimination.

Mrs. T mentions her optimism based on the fact that education in the United States "is open to everyone who wants to study" and feels this is the basic prerequisite for a professional career and should not be denied to the students. In addition, she does not find many public policy formulated for the expressed purpose of excluding individuals from a specific racial, ethnic or religious group from engaging in any career or business. She finds the policy realistic and encouraging. She cites as example starting a family day-care--the government agency, not only issues you the license but also assists in providing guidance and even financial incentives to establish one. She states whatever career her children want to pursue in future, she can be confident there will be no obstacles erected by the government to hamper their aspirations. Mrs. T would not like to leave it to them to decide whatever career they want to pursue. She prefers to play the role of an advisor rather than a dictator.

As regards her children's participation in community activities, she finds it least important for her to interfere. She prefers to leave it to them to decide on the types of community activities and the extent of their involvement.

Mrs. T feels it is difficult to predict what will happen in future in terms of societal changes and how they will impact her children. She does not want to speculate on them and hopes certain social issues like crime, violence, drugs, permissive sex, abuse of government programs have reached its lowest point and will turn for the better in future. She hopes that her children will be more involved in societal affairs beyond voting in elections.

In future, as America confronts the reality of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society, she hopes she can play a small part in contributing toward the greater acceptance of people that are different from the mainstream population. She says, "I can tell the Americans about my culture but I've no right to change anybody. When they ask, I'll inform them and the rest, they have to learn through their observations of others." Mrs. T's stand on cultural differences and her attitude is "whenever I find it necessary to change certain aspects of my way of life, I will do so but not under duress from the American public." She finds American culture and hers can exist together. There is no necessity for the Chinese to change the Americans or vice versa. She feels change should come through evolutionary rather than revolutionary means. She feels respect for every culture is extremely important. She says, "I respect everyone's culture and I expect the American people also to respect my culture and not think negatively of me." She says, "At present it is very encouraging to find most Americans open-minded toward cultural diversities as seen in their participation in a great variety of ethnic festivities, social activities and interracial marriages, free from any pressures to conform to only one culture." She says, "This kind of openness cannot be found in Malaysia." There is no likelihood of her assimilating into American culture in the sense of losing completely her ethnic identity and culture as she feels there is no need for her to do so as "I can exist in American culture like many other ethnicities and America is magnanimous enough to accommodate all cultures of the world." Mrs. T wants her children to be bicultural.

Reflections

She concludes that her migration has been more rewarding than if she had remained in Malaysia. To her, the most important concern is that her immediate family remains intact. The final judgement as to whether the decision was right or wrong would have to depend on how well the children avail themselves of the opportunities. But as of now, she feels her decision is correct. Her yardstick of success is "whether her children are happy with their future. In this way, they will not blame us and to question us as to why we did not take any action to "save" them from the evils of racial discrimination in Malaysia." While her immediate family is together, she misses her mother and other relatives who are still in Malaysia. In reflecting on her migration to America since 1990, Mrs T concludes,

I believe I've done the right thing to migrate although I've given up a lot. Life here is hard and lonely but the main objective for us to come here is for the children and that I've achieved for their education and future. I think we can achieve our aim.

Summary

Mrs. T comes from a family that values education and all of her siblings are professionals in Malaysia. She has strong expectations that all her children will, at least, obtain a Bachelor's degree in America. However, she is not willing to pressurized her children to attain excellence in education at the cost of their sacrificing their love for learning. As Mrs. T has no daughter she could not

comment on how she would handle gender issues in her family. However, she believes that successive future generations of Chinese will stop perpetuating gender preferences. Mrs. T found there are many differences between Chinese and mainstream Americans but through her various coping strategies, she did not allow the differences to interfere with her attempt at accommodations. She is aware of the "model minority" issue at the superficial level and thinks that it is a positive recognition of the Chinese contribution to America. She finds the overall advantages of migrating to America out-weighing the disadvantages.

Interview with Student, Chee (Case 3)

Background

Chee is a 20-year old adolescent studying at U. C. Santa Barbara. He is a senior this year. His major is in communications. He is the elder of two siblings of Mr. and Mrs. L. The younger one, a girl, has just enrolled at the U. C. Los Angeles as a freshman.

Chee was born in Malaysia in 1975. He studied in a Malay-medium school in grade one for four months before accompanying his mother to the United States of America. He was seven years old at the time of migration. He

came with his mother and sister a few months following his father's earlier departure. Hence, he received the greater part of his education in America.

Chee related that he was too small to know the reasons for his migration in 1982. In subsequent years, he was told by his parents that the reasons for their migration were to seek for better economic opportunity, employment and education. He says, "My father won't earn as much in Malaysia as over here. It is easier to get a job here. It is harder to be successful in Malaysia. The standard of living here is also higher."

Educational Background

Chee completed his preschool and kindergarten education in Malaysia. He was in grade one when he migrated. He studied in a national-type elementary school for four months before migration. [By "national-type" is meant the school was formerly English-medium administered, managed and funded by foreign missionaries, but has subsequently converted its status under the implementation of a new national education policy in Malaysia. That implied a change of ownership of all assets and property, the replacement of English as a medium of instruction by Malay, and the power to hire, promote and transfer of school personnel were surrendered to the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The school Chee attended was formerly established by British Methodist missionary, where English was the medium of instruction with Malay taught as a language subject. This school traditionally had a strong British colonial influence in terms of its curriculum, philosophy, administration, teaching methodologies and climate. After these schools were converted to Malay-

medium schools beginning in 1970, the legacy of the dominant use of English as the spoken language in school lingered for some years due to the presence of the more senior teachers who had their education and training in English. However, as the more senior teachers trained in English retire, the standard of English in these missionary schools experienced a progressive decline.] Although Chee was educated in a Malay-medium elementary school, he had more exposure to English than Elwin due to the tradition of missionary schools. [As Chee was enrolled in a national-type school during the years of transition to Malay as the medium of instruction, many senior teachers continue to use English to instruct as they were not proficient in Malay. English was taught as an ESL subject. There was pervasive use of English during non-instructional time.] Despite his relatively greater exposure to English, vis-a-vis those students in the Chinese-medium schools, he still lagged behind the English standard of Malaysian students. It is to be expected as he had only four months of instruction. He says, "I just started to learn the alphabets and simple words like cat, dog, and cow." When Chee first arrived in America, he was placed in an ESL class for about a year. He recollects "he managed to pick up English pretty fast." At present, he feels he is fluent in English. He also knows a little Mandarin and Cantonese but not proficient enough to read the newspapers.

Attitudes toward Education

Chee's attitude toward education, like the other student respondents was influenced by his family, school and environment. He has some recollections of his education in Malaysia.

Malaysian and American Education Compared

In comparing the Malaysian and American systems of education, he finds teacher-student relationship as the most significant. He feels the teachers in Malaysia are stricter and do not know the students well as compared to American teachers. This is due to the fact that "American students are instructed by the same teacher throughout the day, whereas in Malaysia, I was taught by many different teachers." Second, Malaysian parents do not "mingle as much as the American parents with the teachers." Third, in terms of the curriculum, two languages are widely used in Malaysia (Malay and English), whereas in American schools, English is the sole medium of instruction until junior and high schools, where foreign languages are taught. Fourth, Chee finds the American students are given a final grade every three months based on their daily work and tests, whereas in Malaysia, grades are given based solely on examinations at the end of the term. Fifth, he finds there is a difference in parental expectation of the children's academic performance. He says, "It is okay in America as long as one tries hard and there is no need to get an A. Malaysian parents expect their children to do well or they may get caned. The grade achieved must be perfect." Chee remembers "a failing grade is marked with red ink, and the passing grade in blue or black ink." Sixth, he recalls there was a lot of repetition in the learning process (practice and drill) in Malaysian schools, whereas it is not emphasized in American schools. In America, he was instructed through practice and drill in ESL but not in the regular classes.

Chee states he likes American schools better than Malaysian schools. The first reason given is, the school system, administrators and teachers are not strict. Second, there is more opportunity for learning other "special classes like violin playing, singing, other after school activities or just being free." He particularly likes the recess where he can indulge himself in playing games in the school yard as contrasted with the situation in Malaysia, where there was no allocation of time for games. Third, he does not like the Malaysian examination system, where students have to "cram for examinations at the end of the year." He prefers the grading system in America, where the final grade is "not based solely on examinations but rather on what you have done during the normal course work and projects."

Problems Encountered in American Schools and Coping Strategies

His most serious problems encountered in a new school setting initially, was his low academic grades. He attributes this to his problem in learning English, which took him about one year to become proficient orally. He says, "My grades started to pick up during the second year." He usually turned to his parents to help him in his school work. He remembers during elementary school, his mother helped him in getting his report ready, and when he was in junior high, he requested help from his father in Mathematics. He does not prefer to seek help from his father because of his impatience. He says, "His voice gets louder and louder when I don't understand." When he was in high school, he did most of the academic work by himself, and sometimes sought help from his cousin. At college, the nature of the problems changes. He says,

"I need money for my education and advice from my parents in the choice of career in future." He is aware his parents want him to work in their business and his father "will be sad if I do not work for him." He is grateful that "they were helpful in suggesting to me the plan of action and they expect me to make up my mind." He is not sure what he really wants to do and finds that "the easier way is to follow what my dad wants and I don't have to think that much, as a path has already been chosen. At present I don't see any other kind of work."

Chee regards school as very important to him. He plans to go to college while in high school. He believes once he graduated, he has achieved the first step towards getting a job. He believes education is more than getting good grades as "you can also learn something more about yourself. Being in college by myself, I experienced my own life." Chee believes one can become wiser when educated. He draws from his experience, noting that there are "a lot of kids who are naive and tend to be less respectful toward others but once they passed my age, I see many of them are changing."

Chee regards school as "a place where one can learn something about things and to have an education." Besides this, he regards going to school as "a place for his socialization with other children."

On the other hand, he dislikes certain courses of study which he thinks are interesting judging from the titles and course outlines, but in reality turned out to be the opposite. He dislikes the bullying by bigger students in schools. He relates an incident when a bully took his bicycle home. He has to walk down the block to ask from the bully's father. He noticed that the father just reprimanded the boy. On another occasion, he reveals he was forced into a scuffle with another boy as the other party mistakenly thought he had thrown a

ball at him. In college, he dislikes the restrictive schedule of classes as it is difficult to enrol for courses at the particular time he wants.

While in school, Chee reveals he has no trouble making friends. The only problem he encountered was the teasing by American peers. They added "se" to his name to make it sound like "cheese". He says he felt "bad at first and wanted to change my name" but as he grew older, he just took it as a joke. To overcome the teasing, his coping strategy was to continue to play with those who teased him. He says, "If you react, the teasing will become worse. I just don't bother with it." He remembers he has friends who stood up for him, although he did not request it. He did not approach the teacher for help either. Another of his coping strategy to avoid the teasing was to sit near his friends. He recalls when he first entered school, he felt "scared with all the people looking at you." Other than that, he finds it difficult to recall any pleasant or unpleasant incidents during his early days in the United States.

Gender Issues

Chee believes there is no difference in ability between Chinese boys and girls. He says, "The only difference depends on the amount of work one puts in." Chee thinks the males and females are treated fairly by members of the Malaysian society, as well as in America. In his household, Chee feels his parents treat him differently from his sister in that they "shelter her more. They did not permit my sister to do what I did. I went out more with friends." He feels the reason is "she is a girl, and she is very close to my father who is rather protective of her."

Chee believes "women are just as good as men and they should be given equal opportunity in terms of occupation and education." However, he feels "certain jobs that require a lot of physical strength are more difficult for women to perform like lifting heavy boxes and crates." He feels women should have the same basic rights as the men.

Adjustments to American Society/Culture

In reflecting on his feelings when he first arrived in the United States, Chee says, "I was very excited for three reasons. I was very happy to see my father after missing him for about three months." He explains that his father arrived in advance to get acquainted with his job, to scout for an apartment and to assess the school system and schools. The other reasons are, "I was also very excited as I had the opportunity to explore a new environment and it was the first time I had experienced travelling in a airplane." When he first attended school, he encountered some difficulties with his communication as his standard of English was low. However, he was able to pick up the language fast enough to be transferred from the ESL to the mainstream class after a year.

Malaysian and American Culture/Society Compared

When Chee arrived in the United States, he finds there are quite a number of differences in culture that he has to adjust to. First, the social convention of declining an invitation between Malaysians and Americans is different. He says, "When an invitation is made to friends or even relatives to

visit each other, Malaysian people will give excuses for not being able to do so, rather than a direct decline, whereas the Americans, will just decline without having to make excuses." Second, the general knowledge of outside world. Chee finds Americans ignorant of "anything about world events outside America and they only rely and believe whatever the newspapers tell them." In contrast, "the people in Malaysia are more aware of what is going on around the world, including in the United States" Third, Chee distinguishes the difference in attitude of the people toward work and punctuality. He says, "In Malaysia, the people are more relaxed, life is easier and tend to move slower, whereas in the United States, the people are not so relaxed as all activities are scheduled and planned to meet a particular target." As a result, Chee finds that in America, the "days seem to pass by faster." Fourth, in relating the social behavior of people and their attitude toward punishment for crimes, he says, "Malaysian society is less tolerant of crimes and has stricter laws, whereas in the United States, the laws are very relaxed and appear to be very tolerant of crimes." Fifth, in matters of marriage, Chee admits he does not really know much but notices that to get married in America is very simple and people "just want to have sex." He is not sure whether the situation is the same in Malaysia. However, he feels there is stronger family ties among Malaysian Chinese. There is a strong sense of obligation by the elders to shelter adolescent children from getting married too early and from being too easy with sex. Sixth, in family relationship, he feels the American practice of sending elderly parents away to community centers is a "sad practice." Seven, in commercial dealings, he finds the manner in which business transaction is carried out is better in the sense that within 30 days of the purchase of a certain good, there is price guarantee and one can return the

merchandise within that period of time, whereas in Malaysia, once a merchandise is bought, it cannot be returned. Eight, in discussing the amount of effort students put into their school work, Chee thinks Malaysian students appear to "study harder for the examinations whereas the kids in America don't care to study as hard as they have several chances to improve their grades."

Problems Encountered and Coping Strategies

Although Chee is able to identify many cultural differences as practised by Malaysians and Americans, he finds no serious problems. He explains the reason, "I was brought up here (in America) and my parents learn about basic parenting skill here." He feels he is comfortable growing up in his earlier years due to the ability of his parents to make a smooth adjustment to American society. His problems basically, were confined to "teasing by my peers, one or two fights and confronting the bully's parent to get my bicycle back." He copes with the problems either on his own or through consultation with his parents.

Racial Discrimination

In recounting incidences where he feels he has been discriminated on account of his race, Chee feels that whatever discrimination he has experienced in or outside of school is confined to "name-calling by people because you are Chinese." He relates the incident at a flea market where his mother was told to go back to China by an American man. Chee copes with this type of discrimination by "ignoring and forgetting it." His attitude is, those

people who are racists have a "lot to learn and they are confined to living in a small world. I can't see why people are racist!" Chee uses "time" as a means to forget about the incident as long as they do not hinder him physically. He is prepared to take physical action if push comes to shove. Otherwise, he says, "There is nothing you can do about it. Time will be the best coping strategy." Chee has also attempted to use meditation as a means of calming his emotions but admits it is difficult to really practise it as his attention span is too short.

Generational Conflict

Chee relates he cannot remember any big differences he has with his parents that can be considered as a generational conflict. There is no serious divergence in values, beliefs, hobbies, way of life between his parents and him. He is quite obedient and usually "did what my parents told me to. If not, I will be in trouble." He holds the stand that "parents are in charge and whatever they say, goes." He did not find anything to argue about with his parents. His strategy is to find something to do that "I am happy with and at the same time meet the expectations of my parents."

Impact of American Culture

After residing in America for the past 13 years, Chee feels he has not undergone any changes in his basic values, beliefs, attitudes towards life and education as a result of living in a new culture and society. He says he just accepts whatever values and beliefs his elders impart to him.

When asked to list the Chinese cultural practices he wants to retain or reject, he says he does not know much about Chinese culture and traditions. He feels he is very Americanized. He thinks Chinese Lunar New Year is very important, but finds Mooncake festival "nothing important to me." He states if he gets married, he will probably follow a Chinese wedding ceremony. Although his grandmother is a practising Buddhist, he has no affinity for the religion. He admits he does not know too much about certain aspects of Chinese culture he should reject, perhaps foot-binding and the marrying off of the daughter.

One of the American cultural practices he wants to emulate is allowing children to explore and learn about themselves. He finds that "a lot of Chinese parents limit their children to the pursuit of certain occupations like medicine and engineering. They don't let them explore. Not everyone can be a lawyer or doctor." He finds Chinese parents overprotectiveness of their children, bad.

Chee thinks family ties among Americans are not strong, unlike those of Asian and Jewish families. As a consequence, he finds many "kids become rotten although they may be very smart." There is too much preoccupation with individualism of a "me, me kind of world." Chee finds Americans worry less about money as compared with Malaysian people. However, "Americans are too concern with power and sex." One aspect of American way of life he feels he should reject is the attitude of complaining and whining about

not having a job or that some other people are treating me bad because of my color, or someone pushing me down because of race or gender. The truth is, the people are plain lazy and will normally go to welfare and not look for a job.

Chee sees the excuses as the attempt by some American people to cover up their lazy attitude towards life.

Model Minority

Chee says he is aware of the term model minority and he defines it as "anyone, basically minority who are doing very well in American society. Typically, Asian Americans are considered model minority. This includes the Chinese as well. They are those who have made a name for themselves, unlike those who do nothing." Chee has read from the Time magazine depicting Asian children as doing well in education, causing no trouble like the other races, working hard, doing well economically and stereotyping Asians as smart. He also reveals many Asians are professionals, for example, immigrants from Malaysia are engineers. Chee regards the label as a "form of grouping people together." He considers the stereotypical view of Asian Americans as "model minority" can have a negative or positive consequence depending on who is doing the stereotyping. He believes the government has "something to do with the labelling." Chee gives as evidence the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II where they were subjected to negative propaganda by the government and were treated very badly. Japanese were treated positively by the mainstream people and government after World War II but turned negative again in the 1980s. He relates how way back in history, Chinese were viewed in the most unfavorable of terms, but now the Chinese are looked in a more positive way. However, there are still cases where Chinese are perceived in a negative manner.

Reasons Chinese Students are Excelling in Schools

Chee believes the reasons some of his Chinese friends are excelling are as follows: First, "the Chinese students work hard." Second, they have set goals. Third, there is the element of personal drive as many of his friends want to succeed. He says, "Some are very money-minded and want to make a lot of money, to have fancy cars and to move up the social ladder." Fourth, Chee attributes the success to parental pressures on the students to work hard and "be really good when they were little kids so as to go to college." He knows that many of his peers responded to that. He says, "Asian parents are stricter and pushed the kids to do better." For those Chinese peers that do poorly, Chee reasons they are just lazy although some of them have the potential, but "they just don't know what to do, or do last minute work half-heartedly." Another reason is, they are not interested in their major, hence, they "don't put in effort." Chee concludes by saying he is not sure whether Chinese are smarter as there is no hard evidence to show and also there are "not many Chinese who are recognized as genius."

In comparing the academic performance of Chinese students to other non-Chinese students, Chee perceives the Chinese students as "doing above average." For him personally, he admits he does not do very well in school. In general, he thinks American students are "lazy," but some of them do very well academically. He says, "in high school, most of my Chinese friends did very well."

Impact of the Model Minority Status

Chee feels that however the "model minority" label is viewed, whether negatively or positively, it is still stereotyping and he does not agree with it. In viewing the Chinese as a "model minority" in the positive sense, it implies that "the Chinese have, as a group, tried very hard. It is good that it is recognized." He thinks that "it is an advantage that people look at you in a different light--that you work hard. There is a tendency for employers to hire Asians." However, he emphasizes he has come to know of some Asians who are lazy in the United States as well as in Malaysia. He finds there is also a lot of stereotyping in Malaysia where certain groups of people are viewed as "all good or all bad." Chee feels the labelling does not affect him adversely. He does not mind people viewing him positively or negatively as he can fit into either label. He does not take issue with it as he considers those who views him positively now can also view him negatively later on.

Chee is aware that not all Asians fit into the "model minority" label as he has friends who are not hardworking as well as those who are "bad Asians like the gangsters, drugs pushers and addicts, for example, the Asians in San Francisco. There are also those who are hanging around doing nothing or indulge in gambling. The "model minority" label does not fit everyone." Chee finds a lot of his high school peers believe they are the "model minority" and when the label fits them, they are very happy that they are recognized as such. He notes that many of his "friends went to Berkeley and other top-notch schools and for most of the time, it is true."

He does not feel he is treated differently by teachers, classmates and others on the basis of being a Chinese. He considers he is treated the same as everyone else.

The Future

Chee is optimistic his chances of doing well in college and in the world of work as "pretty good." He believes he has a lot of "connections as many of my friends who have already graduated are doing well." He feels it would be easy for him to get a job with them. Besides this, his father has other business connections which could help him establish himself. He feels his major in communication is a "upward mobile field, next to computer science. It covers a wide field." He is confident because he is hard-working and is bright enough to succeed, although comparatively he is not that successful in school. His other quality of being well-organized is advantageous to him. Chee plans to enroll in the Masters in Business Administration program, to learn how to manage an organization and work as an intern in a business firm. He is confident he will succeed as he has the drive to do it. Alternatively, he is considering working with his father after his bachelor degree. He says he has a full year to decide his next course of action.

In order for him to achieve his plans, Chee feels he needs to obtain more skills in other areas like computing and interneting. He needs his family support to succeed. He realizes he needs to work hard and be on his own.

As a Chinese American, Chee believes "one must think positively in order to succeed." He senses the longer the Chinese have resided in the

United States, the more successful they are. They are also more willing to contribute to American society. Chee sees some Chinese are already engaging in philanthropic work, but feels more should be doing so. He says, "I don't see many Chinese contribute to community and they are very involved with the family but not beyond that." He hopes that attitude will changed. He realizes the reason why first generation Chinese are not able to contribute to society as they are concerned with their first priority of helping the "family to become very strong economically. They need to make sure that the family is safe and well first." As for himself, he is more inclined to contribute to humankind and feels he has an obligation to do so as he "has taken a lot from the world and have to give back if you are able to."

In retrospect, Chee realizes there are many Malaysian children who, after migrating to the United States, "became too Americanized too rapidly so much so that they do not have a connection to their roots of being a Malaysian Chinese. They do not know what their culture is like." He wishes at some point, there is some kind of organization to inform these children of their culture, their roots, and to learn more about themselves so that they can have an identity of their own. He concludes, "To know about oneself goes beyond just learning the Chinese language."

Summary

Chee has a slightly different educational background from Elwin and Wern in three very distinct aspects. One, Chee was educated in a Malay-medium school while the latter were educated in Chinese-medium schools.

While Chee had his education in Malaysia for four months, the latter had theirs up to grade five and grade seven. Third, Chee's length of residence is longer in America, 13 years while the latter two, five. As Chee has a short span of education in Malaysia, he did not have the opportunity to acquire sufficient first-hand experiences of the Malaysian system of education to discuss in great detail when comparing and contrasting the American and Malaysian systems of education. Chee's longer duration of residence in America has enabled him to adapt effortlessly to the American way of life as reflected in his ability to function well in America with ease and does not experience much difficulties in adjustments. Chee believes that girls are as capable as boys intellectually and should be treated equally. Chee is aware of the "model minority" issue from his college course work. He treats the label lightly and believes it has little value. He believes that it was popularized by the government for their own agenda. Chee believes that his future career and life in America is encouraging.

Interview with the Mother, Mrs. L (Case 3)

Background

Mrs. L was born in 1954 in the northern state of Penang in Peninsular Malaysia. She is the sixth among a total of nine siblings. She has four elder

sisters, an elder brother and three younger brothers. She lived in Penang for most of her life until she got married. Her age difference with her eldest sister is 15 years. As a result of this age difference, she was not privy to some family matters, like her father had a first wife in China until very recently. Her second youngest brother died while he was in preuniversity class as a result of a collision between his motorbike and a motorcar.

Mrs. L's father migrated alone to Malaysia from the province of Fujian in southern China. His wife refused to accompany him to Malaysia. Mrs. L does not know the reason for her refusal. [As was the practice with many filial daughter-in-laws, it could be speculated that the wife remained to look after the parents-in-laws.] Her father married Mrs. L's mother in Penang. Her mother too migrated from southern China. Although Mrs. L's father married a second wife in Malaysia, he continued to fulfil his obligation as a husband and father by keeping continuous correspondence with them and remitting money to China for their household expenses. While in Malaysia, her father worked as a clerk in a retail store selling bicycles for his employer. Since her father was able to keep accounts, read invoices and correspond on behalf of his firm, he must be educated. She says, "I knew that my father received some education in China, but I do not know to how high a level. He could read Chinese story books, newspapers and write in Chinese." This was confirmed by her half-brother when she made a trip back to visit her relatives a few years ago. As her father had to feed his eleven-member family, his income might have been just sufficient to meet their daily needs. One of the consequences of a tight household budget was, all her siblings had to seek employment after their Form 5 examination, except one brother who went on to obtain a college degree.

She estimates that they were in the lower income level, just above the poverty level. Her mother was a full-time housewife and was uneducated. She migrated to Malaysia from China when she was about 10 years old.

All her siblings are gainfully employed in Malaysia, except one sister, a nurse, has migrated to Australia. Her eldest brother is an assistant principal in one of the secondary schools in Malaysia. Her eldest sister is a nurse; the second sister, a clerk in a law firm; the third sister, also a nurse and the fourth sister, a clerk. One of her younger brothers owns a business dealing in jewellery designing while the youngest sibling, who is 26 years old, works as a draughtsman in an architectural firm in Penang. All her siblings had formal schooling. She attributes this to her father "making sure that everyone in her family is educated until Form 5 or Form 6."

Before migrating to the United States in 1982, Mrs. L was a full-time housewife, taking care of her son and daughter. At the time of migration, her son was seven years old and the daughter, four. At present, her son is a senior in college and her daughter is a freshman. As Mrs. L was not working, her husband was the sole income-earner. She considers themselves to be on the lower middle income level in Malaysia. Her husband worked as an engineer with a private firm. After living in the United States for 13 years, she feels that she can be classified as belonging to the upper socio-economic status.

At the time of migration, Mrs. L was 28 years old. She arrived in the United States two months after her husband. The lapse of time was for her husband to rent an apartment and to facilitate the process of migration for her and the children. Her husband worked for an American private firm in the computer industry. He was seconded to work in America. The American

employer subsequently applied for the work permit as well as their permanent residency. Her reason to migrate was to follow her husband's decision. If left to her own decision, she would not have migrated. Her husband's reasons for migration was, first, to seek a better economic future and living. Second, for the children's education. Mrs. L reveals that she did not personally feel racially discriminated while in Malaysia since she was not engaged in the world of work and her family was not financially strong enough to afford her preuniversity education. She did not feel the discrimination could be due to the fact that Penang has a majority of Chinese residents and she had no dealings with the government. She mentions she does not permit herself to be cowed by petty Malay racist. She cites an incidence of a confrontation with the police. She says, "I will argue with them."

Educational Background

Mrs. L's highest educational attainment was the O-level. She did not pursue preuniversity education because she did not aspire for higher study, financial constraints and lack of encouragement from her parents. She did not obtain any professional qualification as she got married one or two years after finishing school. Since arriving in the United States, she did not engage in any form of academic study, preferring to spend her time as the homemaker. She does not have any educational plan for herself in the future, as there is no necessity for her to have one. She speaks English, Malay, and Mandarin other than Fujian, which is her mother tongue. Her Mandarin is confined to conversational Mandarin. She did not receive any Mandarin education while in

Malaysia. This was because her father sent alternate child to study in English and Chinese-medium schools. She does not know her father's reason for this decision. While in the United States, she enrolled at De Anza Community College, Cupertino to study Mandarin for one semester only. She hopes to employ a private tutor to teach her Mandarin at home, but does not have the opportunity yet.

Mrs. L does not inherit any special attitude towards education from her parents. She does not recall her father discussing any specific expectation or aspiration for her. Since she was the youngest girl in the family, she had the advantage of sibling guidance in her academic work.

Working Background

Mrs. L did not hold any permanent occupation after her secondary education due to marriage. While in America, she continued to be a housewife for 10 years. It was only in 1993 that she decided to start working for a private firm. By that time her younger child was in high school. She worked for a private company doing business with NASA. Her job was to expedite the buying services of the company. She held her position as a purchasing officer for about a year. Her husband had just started his own business dealing in manufactured goods and provide consultancy services for international business. She resigned from her job to work for her husband as a chief financial officer. She is in charge of accounts. She finds her job easy as the payroll is taken care of by an outside firm, and the income tax by another agency. She does not have to write any report as the company is still a small

one. The company employs four other workers at her office located in San Jose. The company has a representative in Texas who will visit the office once a month and another salesperson in Orange County in Southern California.

Mrs. L feels that she is satisfied working with her husband, but "I actually don't like to work. I prefer to stay at home. I want a quiet life. For me, business is stressful as I have to worry about employees and sales performance." She is a homely woman. Her aspiration in her professional life is "to earn as fast as possible and then to retire." She hopes to hand over the business to her children.

Socio-economic Status

When they first arrived in the United States, Mrs. L's family did not experience any drastic fall in their socio-economic status. At present, her family has moved up in their SES. At present, there is no visible constraint to her family's continued upward mobility. She does not find racial discrimination against her economic advancement. Mrs. L is not personally aware of the racial policies of the Malaysian government. She did not suffer the consequence of Malaysian discriminatory practices. She attributes this, perhaps, to her not being politically conscious. For example, she reveals that even in the midst of the racial riot right in the city where she lived, she did not know what the reason was except that she was forbidden to venture out of the house due to a curfew in force. She did not experience the conflict of interests with the Malays as she was not competing with them in the world of work. She surmised that it could be

due to the fact that her family did not possess a television. She says, "I was very ignorant at that time. When I read the book now, I know the history of the riot."

While here in the United States, the only community activity she has participated was to volunteer as teacher helper in the classroom with her children. She could not find time to attend as by the time her husband returns from work, it is too late and she is too tired to participate. She is not a member any social club or society. Her reason for not participating is that first, she is not interested and second, she does not keep abreast of community activities.

She considers herself having a moderate number of friends, most of them are business-related. She has about 50 friends and most of them are Chinese from Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, China and other south-east Asian countries. She does not have many White friends. She knows some American friends through her children, the rest being colleagues, neighbors or people from Malaysia.

Attitude toward Education

Mrs. L feels education is important as it "helps you to find a good job and makes you more aware of things." By being "aware of things" she cites as example, her mother's unwillingness to visit the hospital as there is a lack of trust in Western medicine. Instead, her mother consulted the more superstitious method of healing by going to Chinese temple seeking help from one of the dieties in Chinese mythology. The person in a trance prescribed herbal medicine or gave a piece of paper with writings on it to be burned, then mixed

with water for the sick to drink. She believes it would be "more reasonable to seek help from modern medicine."

She is happy that her two children are now studying in universities. She hopes they will be marketable in the United States as many jobs are in the high technology field. She hopes they will earn a better living. She believes education can help her children resist the temptation of indulging in drug abuse and be able to make correct moral decisions. In reflecting on her own education, she says, "I did not go further in my education partly due to the lack of opportunity resulting from family financial hardship, and partly I don't want to."

When her children were in the elementary grades, she was committed to their education by volunteering to help in schools. She indicates that she used to attend parent-teacher conferences so as to know her children's academic progress. When her children entered high school, she stopped volunteering as she felt they were able to take care of themselves. She offered her help only during graduation ceremonies.

Malaysian and American System of Education Compared

In comparing the American and Malaysian systems of education, she points out that the most outstanding difference is the standard of Math. She feels that the standard is quite low when compared to that in Malaysia. She also finds there is a difference in emphasis. American schools stress more on word problems. A second difference is that, "there is no teaching of respect for elders." She notices American children do not use respectful titles to wish adults. However, her children's adolescent friends are well-mannered. Third,

in terms of curriculum, she finds that the subjects of study are divided differently. For instance, there is no geography as a subject by itself. She also realizes there is very little world history taught to the children. A fourth difference is in the workload. She notices her son had very little homework but that her daughter had more, and "at times she had to work late at night." Fifth, she finds the grading system different, where at the elementary level, more descriptions are given and are graded with "excellent," "satisfactory," and "needs improvement." However, in high school, grades of A to F are given.

She finds the strength of the American system of education is in the grading system. It is fairer than the Malaysian grading system. The American system takes into consideration other factors like effort, progress made, and any learning disability, besides the marks scored in examinations.

She observes that American school children are more confident, "speaking what they have in mind." To her this is positive. She is also aware that there are many clubs for children to join, and they are also more active as a result of the greater opportunity to participate in school activities. She finds that American teachers are very friendly as compared to Malaysian teachers.

Compatibility of the American System of Education to Children's Needs

Mrs. L is uncertain about the compatibility between her children and the American system of education. She says she monitored her children's education when they were in school but does not "follow up." As she feels that her children's grades were quite good, she did not really check on their work. To her, good grades are "Bs and As and Cs are also acceptable." She will

inquire only when the kids received bad grades like Ds or Fs. Her attitude on grading is, "Grades are not very important, but what the kids grow up to be is important. I don't stress too much on grades; children have to be good kids too." She relates how she felt scared each time she scored bad grades in Malaysia. This was not due to the fear of her parents caning or scolding her, but just because of her guilt feeling that she did badly. She explains that her parents "don't care much about grade either and they let us learn on our own to get good grades."

In the process of her children's adjustment to American schools, she says both her children experienced a lot of peer pressure from being made fun at, "There can be cruel students and this is due to their inability to 'click'." She notices that some American students "look down on Asians." Her son suffered at the hands of American students because initially, he could not speak English well and his accent was also a problem. He was "picked on by older kids and bullied by them." One of the common forms of bullying was making fun of his son's name by linking it to the advertisement on some chi-chi toys. Her daughter's self-esteem was also battered when American children teased her by relating her name to egg yolk from its rhyme. As a consequence of this, her children complained to her and they decided to take up American names. She did not permit them to do so, explaining to them that, "American kids are not informed of the differences in names and cultures." Her daughter took it harder and experienced more stress because she is more "serious." She advised her daughter not to take it seriously, "Ignore them; you can do better than them. If they say something wrong, you don't have to listen to them; believe in yourself." She also advises her daughter to cope by "letting the teasing come in one ear

and going out the other." On the other hand, her son is more carefree and patient. Her two children did not turn this issue into a confrontation. They listened and accepted her explanations. She concludes that as her children grow up and her son learns Mandarin and Chinese culture in college, they became aware of themselves as individuals and are happy with the uniqueness of their names.

Mrs. L gave another instance where she had to assist her daughter cope with an incident caused by her teacher. Her daughter wrote an essay at high school to be submitted to the teacher. The teacher rejected her essay accusing her of plagiarizing. Her daughter came to her for help. She and her husband consoled her by telling her that they believe she can write and promised that they would take up the case with the school principal if it was not resolved. They knew she could write as she had won a writing competition in elementary school. Subsequently, the daughter was given a passing grade without their confronting the teacher and principal. This incident aroused their suspicion that there might be some racial discrimination involved and that the teacher "looked down on Asian students."

For their future career, she reveals that her son is indecisive in his future academic plan and did not declare his major until the third year of college. Initially, he wanted to be a teacher, then an artist and finally has settled down on a communication major. When her son mentioned that he wanted to be a teacher, she advised him against it by informing him of the potential problems he might have to face with school children. Her daughter is more decisive and has already indicated she wants to be an electrical engineer. She hopes her daughter would take up accountancy to help in their family business. In the

event that her children are agreeable, she wants to train them to take over their business. Alternatively, she is aware that if they work with others it will also be a good idea as they will have a sense of urgency and be more "aggressive." If they were to work for their parents they might tend to be more relaxed. She concludes by saying she leaves "the choice of college course and career to her children and just play the role of an advisor."

Impact of American Values on Education

Mrs. L does not feel there are many areas of conflict between her values and the American values. Hence, she does not have to make many accommodation. She relates the following differences. First, is the concept of family life. She finds there are too many divorces in the United States and she is worried about this aspect, especially now when her son is having an American as a steady girlfriend. Second area of concern, is the freedom the mass media has. For instance, over the television there are so many cases of exploitation of women by having them appear scantily dressed in advertisements. Third, the relationship between children and adult. She finds American children often talk back to adults. She has heard, but has not witnessed herself, that as soon as American children attain 18 years of age, they are asked to leave the house. She does not believe that all American parents do that. Similarly, she finds that elderly American parents, are put into "old folks homes or nursing homes." She relates that one of her friends is running a nursing home for the aged in Campbell. She notices that there are some Chinese elderly persons staying there. She guessed this must be due to

the acculturation of Chinese children to the American way of life. She is also aware that the children who placed their parents there are responsible and do visit their parents. However, she is surprised as normally, Chinese children do not send their elderly parents to senior centers. Mrs. L thinks that in America, "the older you get the more useless you become. It is very pitiful for old people to live alone."

In relating the cohesiveness of family life after her children are married, she expects it would be impossible for her children and her daughter-in-law to live in the same house. What she feels as more realistic would be for her to live nearby, but she is not confident this would happen considering the different Chinese and American lifestyles.

Mrs. L hopes the different American values would not have a negative influence on her children's education.

Reaction to Allegations for Some Minority Students' Failure

In discussing why some minority students are not doing well in schools, Mrs. L does not agree with the reasons given. She believes if her children do poorly in school, it is due primarily to their not working hard enough. She does not attribute their failure to extraneous causes like the prejudice of teachers, school regulations, curriculum, teachers' lack of cultural awareness, gender bias, instructional incompatibilities or other causes beyond the control of her children. She feels fortunate that her children are doing well in school. She does not receive complaints from their teachers. She believes, "Oriental parents will just ask their children to study harder as they stress too much on

grade and this indirectly put stress on the children." Her daughter is hard working and stressed herself out too much at high school, perhaps due to peer pressure as her close friends are good students. She "wanted to keep up with them. My daughter will feel bad herself if she does not get As in school." She finds her daughter studying all the time, while her son has to be reminded constantly to study.

Mrs. L does not agree that perception of labor market discrimination can affect ones' ability to perform well academically in school. She believes that failure to perform well in school is due to a lack of proper study habits, low self-esteem, and negative environmental influence like drugs and crimes. She feels that it is just an excuse.

Bilingual Education

Mrs. L thinks that bilingual education is the learning of another language and she is inclined to send her children for such education, if available. Her reasons are that learning Mandarin will help her children to understand more about their roots and also for practical uses like in business and travelling.

Gender Issues

Mrs. L feels that the more traditional Chinese parents in Malaysia still harbor some gender discrimination against females. Citing her family as example, she says, "My parents' mentality is that boys are more important than girls. I think it is a bias." This preference for males is evident by the fact that her

parents financed her elder brother (second-born in the family) to college while her eldest sister, who is the first-born was not given the same opportunity. Gender discrimination is deep-rooted among the Chinese. For example, only the males can "carry on the surname" and also "once a girl is married, you have to go to the husband's side." She reveals that some Chinese went to extremes by making a condition for their prospective son-in-law to take the surname of the wife's family when they do not have a son of their own. Alternatively, the first-born son has to take after the surname of the wife's family. From her own experience, she noticed that her brother was given powdered milk to drink while the daughters were breast-fed, under the erroneous belief that the former type of milk was more nutritious than the latter. Another example is that girls had to perform a lot of household chores, whereas the boys were exempted. However, she finds she has enjoyed some privilege by being spared the household chores since she was the youngest girl in the family. Mrs. L feels such gender discrimination is on the wane as many women are career women and are economically contributing to the family income. She feels this tends to change the men's attitude toward gender discrimination. She concludes, "Personally, I think gender discrimination is bad and all women should be treated as equal. When I do not ask my son to do household chores, my husband complains and insists on him sharing out the work with their daughter." Mrs. L qualifies her attitude on gender discrimination by noting that sometimes, "girls want to be treated like a male and this may ruin the family."

Comparison of Gender Issues in Malaysia and America

In comparing the treatment of the females in America with those in Malaysia, Mrs. L is aware that the former have more freedom and are more advanced than the latter. In Malaysia, there are still some special privileges accorded to the males over the females which, she reasons, is due to the fact that the males are, in a majority of cases, the breadwinner in the family. Mrs. L cites an example of gender discrimination that is common in both countries and wonders why it should be happening, that is, women have to pay more for getting their hair done. She is positive there is no gender discrimination in educational opportunity in America, but expresses her lack of information in the Malaysian case. In the world of work, Mrs. L heard from a secondary source that "women are always second to men for promotion" in the United States as well as in Malaysia. In terms of general human rights, the American women enjoy more rights than the Malaysian women.

Mrs. L feels that girls should pursue academic education to as high a level as possible depending on their ability, interest and affordability of the parents. In referring to her daughter, she says, "She wants to go on studying. I think it is good for her self-esteem and confidence." In relating to herself, she says that her lack of higher education has made her feel that she "misses something." Mrs. L thinks that after a certain age, woman usually do not think of further education; they think more of marriage and family. She feels education is important for women to become knowledgeable and where occupation is concerned, maybe, one day a woman may become the president of the United States.

Adjustment to American society/culture

Before migrating to the United States, Mrs.L did not venture to any other countries outside of Malaysia. She relates that she did not think much of travelling and to emphasize how little she travelled, she did not even leave the island of Penang before her marriage. She had been happy and contented interacting with her neighbors and friends on the island. After her marriage, the furthest she travelled was to Singapore. While in Malaysia, she travelled to various states on the peninsula, accompanying her husband on job assignments. America is the major foreign country she has travelled to. Her first impression of the United States was that,

everything is so different and fast-moving. It is a rich country. From the plane, San Francisco looks like a fairyland with all the lights. The cars looked so big and the roadways are very well-organized. It gives a nice feeling. In Malaysia, it is so squeezed.

Mrs. L relates the different way things are done between the two countries. Her first experience was in the renting of an apartment where they were disqualified on account of their having no insurance. She states they were lucky as her husband's American friend stood as guarantor for them. She finds her life revolves around her family as she has no relatives here and initially, she knows only one family from Malaysia. A second Malaysian family that she knew lived too far away for her to inculcate any close relationship. When she first arrived 14 years ago, there were no Chinese grocery store around her residence and she had to travel weekly all the way to San Francisco to do her shopping. She was fascinated with the department stores and the

malls and has developed a liking to go shopping. She felt that at times goods were not cheap in the United States when she converted Malaysian currency to American dollars. As a result, she was very frugal. She says, "I felt scared to buy things, as they appeared to be very expensive."

American and Chinese Culture Compared

Mrs. L spends most of her time at home. She feels that she is not aware of any significant cultural differences between Chinese and Americans. She concludes that whatever differences there are, they do not affect. Hence, she did not resort to any special coping strategies to bridge the differences. Furthermore, she states she does not "mix around much" being confined mostly to her "family circle."

Coping with Differences

Mrs. L notices that generally, both her children had a smooth transition into American schools and society. There were some slight social problems. Her son initially faced some problem with his English. He would resort to using Malay when quarrelling with his classmates. Teasing by American students was in the form of making fun of his names to rhyme with "cheese" and "chi" seedlings. In schools, her daughter has to confront the teasing by American students of her slanted eyes and the rhyming of her name with the egg "yolk." Her daughter has also to endure songs with racial connotations sang by American students. She could not recall the exact nature of the teasing. Mrs. L

advises her children to ignore the teasing and they were able to take the teasing lightly. She says, "Somehow, they have to adjust to the society."

Positive and Negative Aspects of American Culture

Mrs. L is impressed with certain aspects of the American culture. She feels they should be emulated such as the closely-knit community activities against child and women abuse. Similarly, there are other supportive services like the Red Cross and the Salvation Army for people in distress. Mrs. L expresses her lack of knowledge about the negative aspects of American culture that she and her children should reject.

Generational Conflict

Mrs. L relates there were minimal cases of differences of opinion between her and her children that can constitute generational conflict. However, she says her son did commit acts which she disapproved of. For instance, her son joined his friends, hanging toilet paper all over the school one night, and some of his friends were arrested by the police. He managed to escape. She admonished her son for the pranks. That was the most serious extent of his misbehavior.

Mrs. L expressed her concern that she might have some trouble with regards to her son having a steady White girlfriend. She fears that there might be a communication problem as culturally Chinese and Whites are very different. She is also scared of divorce. She fears that there might be a loss of

attachment to the Chinese roots if the grandchildren are of mixed race. Furthermore, she feels that if her daughter-in-law were to stay with her, there might be problems with food or the manner and topic of conversation. However, she can only hope everything will turn out well in the sense that her daughter-in-law is understanding and culturally flexible. She hopes her son marries a Chinese girl. On the other hand, she hopes the problems she envisages do not arise as in the case of her sister marrying a White man and they are happily married.

Racial Discrimination

As Mrs. L has revealed previously, she has been living in a rather "restricted" environment at home and not being a career woman, she did not experience discrimination in Malaysia or in the United States. However, in the United States, she experienced an unpleasant racial incident with an old man at a flea market. The old man was minding a store and she counter offered a price for a purse. The old man, for no apparent reason got mad and asked her to go back to China. She was shocked and furious. She shouted back at him. She also said that a young man who witnessed what had happened, asked the old man why he had to say that. She says, "He need not have to shout at me. Just because I bargained, or maybe because of my skin." She had to explain to her children why she reacted the way she did.

On the question of whether a person should abandon his culture in order to succeed in American society, she feels that if a Chinese wants to be a president or a vice-president of a big company, s/he has, perhaps to act like

them. She says, "A lot of Chinese try to act like White and it is not natural. It is not good." She is aware that many Chinese on being denied promotion, have started their own business and have become very successful. Hence, she believes that "one need not have to follow White culture to be recognized." As for herself, she says that she prefers to forgo any promotion rather than trying to "act White."

Gains and Losses from Migration

After migrating here, Mrs. L feels she has gained in her personal development, becoming "more mature, maybe older." She feels her family are now economically comfortable and are definitely better off than in Malaysia. Another gain she has experienced is, she has "the opportunity to do whatever you want. You can move from one job to another." Generally, she finds that "life is not bad and my children are good kids; the food available here is okay. I don't miss home a lot."

However, her greatest loss in migrating here is that her children do not have close relatives to interact with like their cousins, uncles, aunts, etc. She says, "There is nobody related to us and it is sort of sad." The only recourse for her children is to go back to Malaysia once in a while to visit their relatives or have them come over to the United States.

Model Minority

Mrs. L was asked whether she has heard of the term model minority to which she replied in the negative. When explained what the term generally means, she replied that she has no opinion on it and has not had the opportunity nor the interest to think about what that term implies.

The Future

Mrs. L states that she has no desire to further her educational development except learning Mandarin. In the future, she plans to help develop the poor rural district in China where her husband's family comes from. Other than that, she thinks that the future "is hard to predict." She hopes the American government will not discriminate against the minority and wish for peace in the world. She hopes that the Chinese too will not discriminate against other minorities. She also expresses her hopes that in future, her children will be able to participate actively in the American community which she has not been up to the mark for good reasons. She hopes that her children will develop an interest in taking over her husband's business.

Mrs. L believes that the Chinese in America, including herself, will blend into the American society. She hopes for a balance in knowing and be comfortable with the two cultures according to the principle of "ying and yang."

Summary

Mrs. L appears to be quite content with the level of education she has achieved and the supportive role she plays as a full-time housewife. She has minimal experience in the world of work, preferring to devote herself to family life. She does not typically think about her socio-economic status. In terms of her children's education, she does not believe in pressurizing her children to do well in school nor insisting that her children follow the parents' plan of action for future career. She feels that women should have equal rights with men but is not an ardent advocate for women's rights. She has witnessed gender discriminations in her own family. She feels that if women should take the place of men it may spell the ruin of the family. Mrs. L appears not to have much problem in adjusting to American society and culture. She does not experience racial discriminations in Malaysia nor in America due to her status of a full-time housewife and disinterest in politics. She suggests some coping strategies for her children to follow when faced with problems in school. She does not converse much with American friends because she is "scared to offend people with different cultural values and beliefs." Mrs. L is not aware of the model minority debate that is going on in American society. However, she is confident that the future is brighter for herself and her family. She says,

Our movement here is for the better for my family only. It is not better for other relatives. I don't know whether they are be better off in Malaysia. It has to be better for the children's sake. Life seems to be better and we are happy as a family in America.

Interview with the father, Mr. L (Case 3)

Background

Mr. L was born in a small village town of Sitiawan in one of the West Coast states of Perak in Peninsular Malaysia in 1949. He has an elder brother and two younger siblings, a girl and a boy. All his siblings are married. His elder brother is a medical assistant working in the government hospital in his hometown of Sitiawan. His younger sister is a nurse who has since migrated to Australia with her family. His younger brother is an electrical engineer who has at one time lived in America. He is now retired from his engineering vocation and is tending his fruit orchard in Malaysia. Mr. L describes all his siblings as belonging to the middle class in socio-economic status.

Although all his siblings are considered to be middle class, Mr. L relates that during his childhood, his family was very poor. His father worked as a mechanic for an employer earning just sufficient for the family expenses. [The income level of a mechanic in Malaysia is very low, unlike the earning power of a mechanic in the United States. Unless a mechanic is the sole proprietor of the business, his income level is in the low socio-economic status.] It was late in life that his father started a car repair shop of his own, when he was in his early 40s. The family income fluctuated with the ups and downs of his father's business. There were times when he could not afford a meal at the school cafeteria.

Both his parents had only primary education in Mandarin and they are illiterate in English. Mr. L's father did not have the opportunity for higher

education as his grandfather migrated from Kwangtung in Southern China in the early 1900s. Mr. L's grandfather was born in 1880 and migrated to Malaysia when he was 20 years old. He worked for a number of years before his wife joined him. Mr. L's father was the second child born in Malaysia. As usual with the vast majority of new immigrants, Mr. L's grandfather had to struggle just to meet the bare necessities of life.

Mr. L finds the definition of socio-economic status problematic and is uncertain how he should classify himself. Generally, he considers himself to be in the middle income level while living in Malaysia as well as in America.

Mr. L migrated to the United States in 1981 when he was 31 years old. He migrated with his family of four under the category of "employment sponsorship." The most important motivation for him to migrate was to avoid the discriminatory policy of the Malaysian government, particularly in the field of education. He explained the unjust education policy of the government which strengthen his resolve not to allow the same fate to befall his children. His Chinese neighbor, who scored excellent results in the preuniversity examination (Higher School Certificate) was rejected for admission to the local university. The neighbor scored maximum principal level passes with grades of A, B, B, and C (graded from A to E principal passes) could not secure a place in the local college. He says, "This really made me very disheartened that a government can go to such extent to deny its own promising citizen further education." He explained that the girl had to resit the entire examination the next year whereupon she scored even better result. Her result enabled her to be accepted straight to the sophomore year in college. She eventually graduated with First Class Honors. He says, "She was deprived for one year of

her educational and working life just because of the politics of race. This is really too much!" Taking heed of the unfortunate fate of the neighbor, Mr. L says he resolved to migrate and "will never allow my children to undergo this naked racism." He adds that when he was in school, "all my Malay classmates got scholarships and I felt I was poorer than them." This is his most outrageous experience at racial discrimination. However, during his working life, he did not feel much discrimination because he was working in the private sector. He has witnessed the government policy of excluding Chinese from obtaining timber license.

At present, his wife is working with him in his business while his two children attended colleges at the University of California at Santa Barbara and Los Angeles.

Educational Background

Mr. L possess a bachelor degree in science awarded by the University of Science in Malaysia. His professional qualifications were obtained from on-the-job training through numerous short courses organized by the company he worked for. Mr. L has no plan for further educational advancement which he feels does not meet his need for either occupational purposes or to enhance his knowledge base. Since he is managing his own business in the field of manufactured components for the computer industry and consultative and representative services, he thinks further academic knowledge to be irrelevant. He expresses some possibilities of learning more about Chinese history in his leisure time.

Mr. L is very proficient in Malay, Taiwanese and Cantonese besides English. He is also conversant in Mandarin and Hakka at the spoken level.

Although Mr. L's parents had only elementary Chinese education, they were not ignorant of the importance of education for their children. Mr. L says, "They placed quite a lot of importance and sent me to English school in the morning and attend Chinese (Mandarin) classes in the afternoon." Although Mr. L realized the importance of learning Mandarin, he had to forego it when he was in grade six because he had to sit for the compulsory public standardized examination in order to qualify for admission into secondary school. He had to concentrate on this important examination. This resulted in the termination of his Mandarin education after five years of studying.

As his parents were illiterate in English, Mr. L did not enjoy the benefits of their assistance. His father knew only a little spoken English hardly sufficient to guide him in his school work while his mother was totally unexposed to the language. Furthermore, his father had to spend a large proportion of his time outside the house working and had no time to guide him in his academic work. His parents greatest contribution was to encourage him to study hard and have a good education. However, they were not able to indicate their aspiration for him. The choice of occupation and course of study at the college level were left entirely to him. Mr. L received tremendous encouragement from his parents as well as from another unique source from the community. The hometown in which Mr. L grew up was renown for the academic achievement of the students and this community resource has a great impact on his philosophy and positive attitude toward education. [Although his hometown is small in size, the statistics of college graduate per capita among cities and towns in Malaysia would place

it easily among the top few places. Academic pursuit in this town has become part of the community culture.] He says, "In Sitiawan (his hometown), most of the people believed strongly that education is the most important thing in life to attain and through it, to attain whatever objectives one aspires to."

Working Background

After graduating from college, Mr. L worked as a temporary, untrained teacher in Sarawak (one of the two states located in East Malaysia on the island of the former British North Borneo) for a few months. He terminated his service when he was offered employment in an electronic manufacturing company. His first job in this field was working as a manufacturing executive in a local factory in one of the state capitals in Peninsular Malaysia. After working for a year in this position, he left this local company for a larger corporation called the National Semiconductor, working as a process engineer. Subsequently, he served in various positions as executive officer in this company. When he migrated to the United States under this company's sponsorship, he continued to in this position as a process engineer until he left the company in 1992 to start his own business.

Mr. L's business deals with the marketing of semi-conductor packaging material; provides consultation services as well as networking customers and manufacturers. His business covers the local areas, other parts of the United States as well as international, having links to Malaysia and Singapore. He is the sole proprietor of his business located in San Jose. He has been managing his business for the past four years employing four other persons locally as well

as a representative both in Orange County in Southern California and in the state of Texas. His wife is assisting him in the business.

Mr. L expresses great satisfaction in his business due primarily to the freedom to do what he wants and to make his own decisions. As he has been involved in this line of business since the beginning of his working life, he feels very confident with the complexities of the business. He says, "I have deep knowledge of the manufacturing business as I have been trained thoroughly in this field." By becoming his own boss, he avoids the frustrations working at the whims and fancies of others. He has no other aspirations to involve in other business except to expand further this business.

Socio-economic Status

Mr. L does not readily agree to the classification according to socio-economic status and expresses that he does not know at what level of socio-economic status he is in. When given several examples, he places himself as middle class. He finds that there are no constraints to his upward mobility in socio-economic status in America. He does not set any specific target for upgrading his socio-economic status. However, he does aim to work as hard as he can and to expand his business to the utmost of his abilities. He says,

I don't feel any political constraints or anything stopping me from making money except by my ability. There is no constraint of height in my success. It is only limited by who I am and what I am capable of. The constraint is in how much money I have and how much I want to invest.

Mr. L does not recall any instance when he feels he has been discriminated against in America on account of his race. He feels in "dealing in business, I don't feel that if I don't get a particular business, it is because I'm Chinese. I don't care about this." He feels that he is only limited by the type of business, the security and amount of money he wishes to invest.

Mr. L relates he participated very little in community activities especially when his children entered secondary schools. However, he participated in school activities when his children were younger such as going camping with them when they were in the boys' scout and girl guides' companies. He did not attend neighborhood meetings. The principal reason being that he has not time to attend as he has to work 12 hours daily and when he reaches home, usually at nine o'clock in the night, he has to answer or make further phone calls to business associates. He says, at present his life revolves around "working, eating and sleeping." He reveals that previously, on a few occasions, he joined a Malaysian business club and socialize on an infrequent basis with a few Malaysian, Thai and Indonesian friends. He does play golf once in a while with some American friends. He says that he has a couple of hundred casual friends but about 30 to 40 close friends which are confined mainly to his colleagues.

Attitude Toward Education

Mr. L's attitude towards education is that it "provides a better understanding of things; a means of bettering oneself and enriches ones' appreciation of art, culture and life." As Mr. L was educated in English in the British missionary, he did not receive any formal education in the Confucian

way of life. Whatever he knew about the Confucian philosophy was through the practices of his parents like filial piety, attending to the graves of the ancestors once a year and to treat elderly persons with respect and not to scorn the young.

Malaysian and American System of Education Compared

When asked to compare and contrast the Malaysian and American systems of education, Mr. L says he does not know much about the American system as he did not study in the United States. His impression about the American system comes primarily from his limited experience of taking a couple of semester of courses at the local community college and the second-hand knowledge from his children. He admits that it is hard for him to compare.

One of the weaknesses of the Malaysian system of education is that many of the teachers who taught him were not qualified (credentialled).

Second, he finds that at the college level, the Malaysian education system does not provide a student a second chance to do well in their studies. He says, "Every college student has to be dedicated in their work 110% of the time and has to seek for themselves a way to learn, otherwise s/he will be left behind."

Third, the Malaysian college education is "ineffective for learning" as every student is expected to regurgitate facts given by the lecturers. In addition, relevant books are rare and difficult to acquire and whatever limited books are available, students will be hoarding them in an environment of intense competition. Mr. L reveals there are not much learning resources in Malaysia.

Fourth, the college lecturers are not systematic in their presentation and were often disconnected as "they jump here and there, teach things that are not found in the texts, and do not tell what they want to test you. The students are groping in the dark."

Fifth, Mr. L says discipline is more rigid and stringent in Malaysian schools. He finds that the "teachers are very harsh and punished students." He expresses his ambivalence about the effect of this issue.

Sixth, regarding teacher-parent relationship, Mr. L finds there "is hardly any cordial relationship in Malaysia."

Seventh, the Malaysian curriculum does not provide much options as everything is fixed by the education ministry. Mr. L expresses very strong opinion about how the nature of the facts were presented in text-books and whose perspective it was viewed from. He considers the facts given as "fake facts." To quote as example, he mentions the reasons that led to the Opium War in China were from the perspective of the British, which are totally opposite to that presented by the Chinese. There was no presentation of different perspectives on the same issue. As Malaysia was a British colony, the facts taught in school were considered as lies by Mr. L.

Eight, in teacher-pupil relationship, the Malaysian children do not enjoy much "freedom of expression and whatever the teacher says, goes and there is no chance to argue." Furthermore, there is pressure exerted by parents and teachers on students achieving in school.

On the other hand, Mr. L finds that the American system of education more direct and is geared toward "understanding rather than accumulation of

facts." This enables the students to apply the things they have learned.

American students are also given more opportunity to think for themselves.

Second, learning at one's own pace is possible in the United States and there is not much pressure on the students to perform. However, he finds there are keen competition also in good American schools.

Third, Mr. L finds that although it is generally believed that the expectations in the American school is not high on the students, there are exceptions. He compares the expectations of the school in which his daughter attended as very high, but extremely low in a different school where his son attended. He says, "The amount of homework his daughter had was even greater than the amount given in Malaysia."

Fourth, Mr. L finds the teacher-student relationship in America friendlier and more open than in Malaysian.

Fifth, the parents in America are "invited to participate in school activities, join parent-teacher association, open house and have conference with the teachers." Mr. L feels the school and parents are in close contact with each other and whenever there is an activity, the schools will inform parents and they are welcomed to the schools.

Sixth, Mr. L clarifies the general believe the Math as taught in Malaysian schools is harder than in the American schools. He cites as example the math his daughter studies as even harder than in Malaysia and she "did a lot of those theories we didn't do." [Mr. L daughter is in the Advanced Placement for Math.]

Mr. L finds it hard to evaluate the two systems of education, especially the weaknesses of the American system as he is not involved in education.

However, he noticed that generally there seems to be a lack of discipline in schools where students were allowed to do many things which they were not supposed to. For instance, the bringing of weapons like guns and knives to school is a problem that schools appear unable to solve. He thinks this inability to solve a "simple" problem is due to the excessive rights given to children and the ability to abuse the rights with much impunity. He believes that in the American elementary schools, there are not much disciplinary problems.

There certain strengths in the American system of education that Mr. L likes to enumerate. At the secondary level, he feels that the quality is in the practicality of its curriculum in that smarter students are given the opportunity to "study at a faster pace while the slower ones, at a slower pace."

Mr. L believes that the American undergraduate course as very impressive. However, he expresses his reservation about his ability to say for sure which system of education is better but points out that there are more indications that the American system is better. He cites as examples, the many technological inventions as great American achievements, advanced applications in science and scientific research. He feels that the American education meets the needs of children more than the Malaysian system of education.

Compatibility of Children to the American System of Education

Mr. L generally feels that his two children took to the American system of education well as he did not hear "too much complain about the schools." His children did not bring any problem to his attention. He says, "Everything seems

to be all right. They never bring their complaints to me; they might have talked with my wife. I feel there must be some but I am not made aware of." He is particularly strict with his son and this might have discouraged him from discussing any problems with him. He was very aware that his daughter had a lot of homework and studied late into the night, typically past midnight every night. He thinks both his children are getting along well with their friends. He did not hear of any conflicts between his children and their peers. His daughter's friends are mostly Asian while his son has a lot of White and Asian friends. His son's friends usually visited him in the homes and went along with his family on skiing trips.

Both Mr. L's children are attending college and the son, Chee will be graduating this year. Since his major is in communication, Mr. L expects he would be working in advertising or at a television station for one or two years before joining his business. However, his plan changed and he wants Chee to work for him as "lately, I need a lot of help in my business and I would like him to work for me straight after graduation." His daughter is pursuing a bachelor degree in engineering.

Impact of American Values on Education

Although Mr. L is living in at least two cultures, he finds the American cultural values have had very little impact on his traditional values. He attributes this to his age of migration. He says, "I came as an adult and all my values have already been set on the issue of right and wrong." Furthermore, he considers his early education in English-medium schools and his contact with

western work ethics have exposed him to western ideas and values. Thus, he feels there is very little change in his values.

Mr. L thinks that there are bound to be differences in values between two cultures and he is not much bothered by them as he accepts the fact that everybody has different values and the best one can do is to accommodate and live with them. One particular conflicting value is the "freedom of American children to express themselves freely and to openly disagree with the parents." He believes it is difficult to say whether it is good or bad and he does not want to be judgemental about this as he sees that there are advantages and disadvantages. He finds Asian parents, including him are more strict with their children and do not allow them to air their differences of opinion. He observes that one can differ and yet be polite. On this aspect he says,

Asian parents do not have the ability to do it. I haven't taught my children to express their differences although I feel they think differently. My parents did allow me to express certain differences of opinion, yet, somehow, I am very strict with my son and he did not differ much with me.

The second conflicting value is respect for elders and when translated into practice, it can be very sad. He finds there are many elderly parents living in senior centers. He had the opportunity to talk to some of these elderly people and knew from them that they lead very lonely life. He strongly feels that elderly parents should live with their children and grandchildren as they have a lot to contribute to the grandchildren's education in terms of their experiences and wisdom in life.

A third conflicting value is manifested in the bad driving habit of Asians as they are "rude, unforgiving, trying to get ahead of others and refusing others

to cut lanes." He finds that the road manners of Americans are much better and he is more comfortable and agreeable with this value.

The fourth conflicting value is in the crisis in American families such as the rate of divorce, separation, and child abuse.

American men usually bring their wives to places of entertainment like parties and other social gathering which he finds a good thing to do. However, he finds one important component missing, that is, the absence of children at such social gatherings. Americans tend to ignore the children. Mr. L feels strongly against this and "refused to attend such gathering whenever children are excluded."

The sixth conflicting value is in the way of doing business. Mr. L finds the American way of doing is fairer and with more integrity whereas the Asian way like in China is dependent upon a lot of connections (guan xi). As example, he says, "Whenever an American company needs certain goods, they will evaluate the material and if the quality is good and price competitive, they will buy from you. This is based on fairer criteria rather than connections."

How does Mr. L cope with these conflicting values? He simply says that he does not attempt to resolve the differences but just accept them.

Some Allegations for Minority Students' Failure

Mr. L's does not know of the allegations some minority parents made that certain school practices cause minority students to do poorly in school such as prejudice of some teachers, nature of the curriculum, gender bias, instructional incompatibilities and teachers' lack of cultural awareness.

However, he noticed although there were more Chinese in his children's school than German children, Chinese was not taught until recently, but German was offered in school.

Mr. L does not think the labor market discrimination explanation affected his children's school academic performance. He says generally, "Chinese students in my children's school are way ahead of others in academic achievement. This is due to the emphasis placed on education." He reiterated that a solid education is one of the ways "to get ahead in life."

Bilingual Education

Mr. L thinks bilingual education is the teaching of another foreign language to students. After the researcher explained what bilingual education is in the United States, he expressed his willingness to send his children for bilingual education, if one is available. His reason is his children will be able to speak another language and through it the learning of their cultural heritage. He feels his children "should be able to have the benefit of the Chinese culture and they should not lose it." He believes if his children were bicultural, they will be able to benefit from both worlds. He cautions that learning Chinese language and culture does not mean that one should ignore the learning of English. He says, "If anyone wants to live in the United States, s/he has to learn English. I don't agree with those who do not want to learn English." He feels that a multicultural society in America will make for a stronger society and hopefully not to a segregated society. On the other hand, "forcing the learning of English only on ethnically different students will not do."

Gender Issues

Mr. L believes that there is a preference for males over the females in Chinese society which, when practised, resulted in discriminations against the female. He quotes as examples, his wife's family where "girls have to do household work and the males will just eat their meals and walk away" without having to help in the preparation or the cleaning up. The second example is when there is limited financial resources, "the son is given the opportunity to go to college." However, in his own family, he has only one sister and he admits that "my sister is the only girl and she was pampered." He remembers that everyone in his family had to help out in household chores including cooking meals and washing dishes for all his male siblings at home. He says this was due to his mother's insistence that everyone should contribute equal work. In terms of college education, his elder brother and sister did not attend college.

Outside of his family experience, he notices that the general Chinese society only bequeath family business and property to the sons. This discrimination is due to the Chinese believe that a girl is "married off" and the grandchildren belong to the husband's family. In school, he realized that the curriculum appeared to train males to perform certain vocation like machine shop and woodwork while the girls were taught cookery and needlework. This implies that girls should perform work that pertains to the home and boys, work outside the home, making them the breadwinner of the family.

Mr. L reasons the differences in males and females and the roles they play are due to God who "made man and woman differently. They have

different role to play." He believes the "family is the basic structure or the center of existence" and that a couple (husband and wife) have the "responsibility of raising children as a primary aim of life." Mr. L feels that the ideal family unit is for the man to work outside the house and the wife to stay at home to educate and take care of household matters.

Comparison of Treatment of Females in Malaysia and America

Mr. L feels that the American women appear to be treated more equally in terms of education, occupation and rights than Malaysian women. However, Malaysia women are not very far behind due to the influence of westernization. Generally, it would be "sad when Malaysians think that westernization is the same as modernity." Mr. L feels a country, for example, Japan, can be modern and yet be true to their own culture in terms of not copying blindly the less desirable aspects of western culture like high divorce rate, disrespect of elders, broken family, promiscuity, abandonment of elderly parents, lack of discipline, single parent family and senseless crimes.

In comparing the treatment of American and Malaysian women, he notices that Malaysian men do not treat the women as the weaker sex by offering seats to the females or opening and holding the door for them. The only difference is that Malaysian women will wait for the men to begin the process and they can handle things for themselves such working, eating, social interacting.

In education, Mr. L says he does not know much about the treatment of women. In terms of occupation, he observes that certain occupation tend to have more women liked nursing and he does not know the reason for it. He

says, "I don't believe they are trained to choose this job and the reason why they chose this job." Mr. L relates his experience hiring and training women in his business. He expresses his loss when a female employee resigned from her job due to pregnancy after he has spent time and effort training her and she was able to work with him for only two years. He thinks if he were to train a male employee instead, the chances of his staying longer would be higher. He adds, "This does not mean I won't hire female and I will take her back any time if she asks for her job as she is a very efficient worker." In certain occupations that involve travelling, women are at a disadvantage as it is always easier for men to travel freely with less fear of being attacked by criminals.

In terms of the rights of women, Mr. L feels that the American women have more rights than the women in Malaysia. At times it looks like American women may have more rights than the men as they can sue the men for sexual harassment.

Mr. L believes his daughter and son will have the same role to play in his family. There are certain roles that seem to fall to one or the other sex. He thinks if his daughter were to get married and if there is a choice of either his daughter or son-in-law needs to stay home to look after the children, it would be inevitable that his daughter will stay home. Another role expectation is reflected in the way the two genders behave. He says, "My daughter is closer to me and tells me a lot of things as compared to my son." Mr. L feels that he might have been overtly strict with his son and did not spend enough time with him and by the time he realizes this, his son has already become an adolescent. He notices that American parents play many roles with their children--as buddy, as companion, and as advisor. He says, "I wish I could emulate the way the

American parents communicate with their children but I don't know why I couldn't."

In terms of academic education for girls, Mr. L sets "no upper limit for their advancement; it depends on their capabilities. I will support her all the way." However, Mr. L is aware that there might be a trade-off in that if a woman is "over 40 years, and unmarried, they may not have the chance to get married at all; and if she is married, may find difficulty conceiving." If this happens, he states that the woman may "not have someone to look after her in her old age." On the contrary, Mr. L feels that if a woman is not educated enough to be economically independent, then she may not have anyone to depend on.

Mr. L sees there is nothing wrong with women engaging in non-traditional careers like becoming a pilot or an engineer. However, he qualifies his statement by saying,

if the job takes a woman away from home 20 days out of a month, it may not be good for the family. For me there is no way. I would prefer to do with less money. I am very traditional and nothing is more important in life for me than the family--period.

Adjustment to American Society/Culture

Mr. L, like everyone else, has to make some adjustments to the American way of life. The difference may be in the degree of adjustment on account of his age when migrating to the United States and his past life experiences.

Mr. L finds several differences in American culture and society from that of Malaysia. For him and his wife, there seem to be less of a problem as they

are already adults but he observes the adjustment is particularly more difficult for the children. He says,

The peers and school will give them certain values but at home they have to adapt to the parents' values. They have to adapt to the different values given them by the school, society and the home. It is more stressful for them.

American and Chinese Culture Compared

Mr. L acknowledges he has learned more about American society since migrating to the United States. Before his migration he feels that he was more idealistic about American freedoms thinking that American society would be all 'perfect.' The first difference he finds between Malaysian Chinese and American culture is the way the children are brought up. American parents are more open in accepting ideas from their children while Chinese children have to just follow what the parents say. Generally, when American children reached the age of 18, "they are expected to leave the family and be on their own."

The second difference is in married life. He is aware that about 50.0% of marriages end in divorce. He finds there is too much reliance on divorce to solve problems in a marriage. In Chinese society, there are few cases of divorce but the rate appears to be on the increase as the life-styles changed. However, the couple will try their best to make the marriage work. This can be due to several reasons like family economy, economic independence of the spouses or other reasons.

Third, Mr. L sees the relationship between friends as more or less the same with Malaysian Chinese but feels that the level of friendship in American society maybe more superficial. Fourth, Mr. L believes that there is no color-blind society. Racial prejudice is everywhere but when American race relations were to be compared to that in Europe or in Malaysia, it is very much less in America. Fifth, Mr. L finds that American culture tends to make the people more law-abiding, for example in obeying littering laws, refrain from bribing police and obeying traffic laws.

When Mr. L initially arrived in America, his first impression was that this is a good place to live in. He was particularly impressed by the public facilities that are family-oriented. He found public facilities catered to the needs of the family such as camping site, skiing lodge and other places of interests. He feels it is a "nice place for children to grow up in." Furthermore, he feels there are a lot of opportunities and the living standard is high. He says he enjoys life in America.

Coping with Differences

So far, Mr. L has not experienced problems arising from the differences in cultures. He takes it as a natural process that immigrants will learn to adjust to the new society. He says, "I don't see this as an issue and I have not get into any problem."

Mr. L too did not find his children facing difficulties in adjusting to the new culture and society either. He thinks his children might face some but they did not tell him, thus he assumes there is not any.

Positive and Negative Aspects of American Culture

Mr. L is approves of the manner in which laws in America are formulated. There are centralized and decentralized law-making in operation at the same time and the separation of power of the three branches of government seems to be functioning very well.

Second, he is impressed with the way people generally obey the laws like obeying traffic laws, and hygienic laws relating to eating places and littering.

Third, the way parents and adults allowed the children to think and express themselves is positive and they are able to do so to a large extent. He feels that there should be a limit to some of the freedom given to the children, otherwise they will go out of control.

Fourth, there is extensive parental involvement in decision-making on schooling. Their ideas and opinions are solicited.

Mr. L finds there are certain weaknesses in the American society. First, America is not all that free in the sense that he does not feel free moving in society as he fears he may be mugged, shot or robbed. In contrast, in Malaysia one can move about at any hour or the day or night "without being worried about being rob." In terms of the freedom of speech, assembly, worship and in the field of politics, there is no restriction but "when you do that, you may not know when somebody will beat or kill you."

Second, there is very limited free medical care for everyone, especially the poor. Third, like any other society, America is not free from the problem of racial equality as "there can never will be full equality, for instance, different

racial or ethnic group will have their own problem like poverty, teenage pregnancy, crime, broken homes which appear to be perpetuating itself." There is the problem of segregation where "certain group cannot advance economically and politically resulting in some becoming rich and others." Furthermore, he notices there are injustices in American society like "hate crimes against the Chinese and the police are not fair to other races." Fourth, the family life for the elderly is bad. He relates he had the opportunity to discuss with some elderly American parents who lived in the "old folks' homes" and they had expressed to him that they were "lonely, and their children and grandchildren had their own life and visited them only once a year." He feels that the American way of relationship between elderly parents and their children and grandchildren is based more "in terms of convenience-- and a desire to lead my own life." Fifth, there is no role for the grandparents to play in the family like helping to raise grandchildren as they have a multitude of life experiences, knowledge and wisdom that they can pass on to their grandchildren. They are sent to the senior centers for the convenience of the children. Sixth, "there is too much individual rights, so much so that they overwhelmed the rights of the family." He thinks that this leads to the breakdown of the family.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Chinese Culture

In discussing the positive aspects of the Chinese culture that he wants to retain, Mr. L says, "The Asian way of respect for elders is still very attractive to me." He prefers his parents to live with him and his children and believes firmly that it is a better way of life for his whole family, especially the grandchildren

and grandparents. He cherishes the experience, wisdom and company of his parents and feels that they have a lot to contribute to him and his wife as well as their children and this will be a "great advantage for everyone." He says, "When grandparents have a role to play in the education of their grandchildren, life would be more meaningful. Otherwise, it would be like just waiting to die." He finds that the Asian way of life is centered on community life while the American way is centered towards the self. Second, there is a demarcation of family roles. Mr. L feels that in his pursuit for daily livelihood, he has neglected his children to a certain extent and in order to "compensate for this my wife stays home to give them the love and care."

Mr. L considers the disregard of simple laws as one of the worse aspect of the Chinese culture, for example in traffic laws and littering laws. In third world countries, if they could get away with bribing the police, they will not hesitate to do so. Second, the Malaysian parent-children relationship is not as close as the American parent-child relationship. The former functions more on a role specific manner while the latter functions on a parent-friend relationship. Mr. L wishes he could communicate with his son more like the American instead of being too authoritarian. He regrets that he had not been able to relate more closely with his son when he was young.

Discrimination

When in Malaysia, Mr. L did not personally experience much racial discrimination. He noticed that his Malay classmates were given money not for reasons that they were academically excellent, diligent nor for financial needs

as rich Malay students were included. The only reason was race. As Mr. L was from a poor family he felt discriminated indirectly. The moral he obtained from this is that "no matter how hard you work, you will not get the benefit." He was not discriminated in admission to tertiary education as he had excellent results. However, he was very disappointed with the government policy when his neighbor with outstanding result was rejected for admission to college. When he was working for a timber company, he realized that Chinese businessmen could never obtain timber concessions from the government since every licence is reserved for the Malays only. Late in his working life, he worked for a private American company and did not feel much the Malaysian discriminatory race policies. To cope with the discrimination in Malaysia, Mr. L left the country.

While in America, he did not feel he has been discriminated against to the same extent as in Malaysia. He feels that the government policies in the United States regarding education, business, social and other aspects of life are fairer.

He feels that one of the best ways the Chinese in American can help reduce discrimination is by not confirming the stereotypes that the American public has of Chinese. He quotes as examples the stereotypes of the Chinese as not stopping at traffic sign nor refraining from dangerous cutting of lanes on roads. Being a good example may help to reduce American antagonism towards the Chinese.

Since Mr. L did not receive any complaints from his children about racial discriminations, it was difficult for him to answer the question on how he would like them to cope or respond to such situations.

Mr. L does not believe that one should abandon one's culture in order to succeed in American society. However, he feels that "to a certain extent when certain things are the norms of behavior which are positive, one should blend into society." He cites as an example of Chinese who migrated from China and picked up the negative aspects of American society such as particular notions of freedom. They think that freedom is absolute and tend to follow blindly everything American. He adds, "If freedom is not handled carefully, it can destroy them and made them less proud of themselves." One instance he cites is that Chinese girls like to marry American men, believing that they will be elevated to a higher status when they do so. He adds that he often discusses this with his children.

Generational Conflict

Mr. L does not find much difference of opinion between himself and his adolescent children. He finds that his children are compliant most of the time. He has been particularly strict with his son and yet does not find him in conflict situations. He senses his son definitely differs with him on a variety of issues but he does not express them openly. However, he relates that his daughter disagrees with him and he believes that "they would be more mature if they disagree," in respectful ways.

Gains and Losses from Migration

Mr. L feels it is difficult to say specifically whether he has gained from migrating to America. He feels that it is impossible for him to know how he would be if he had stayed in Malaysia. He finds it hard to make a comparison because Asia has changed tremendously economically. He envisages he would be financially performing at the same level and could earn a living with relative ease.

Model Minority

Mr. L says that he does not know what model minority means and he has not read any article about this label and therefore could not comment on it.

The Future

Mr. L is managing his own business. His own self-motivation dictates that he has little opportunity to leave everyday operations to his employees because, he aims to ensure high performance of his firm. He states that he could have a relaxing time if he wants to by allowing the employees to manage the business for him. Mr. L knows that they would not work with the same commitment as he has. Thus he describes himself as "working myself to death" in days to come. He states that he has no leisure, not even free time to spend with his daughter who has just returned from Los Angeles. He has to meet with customers and employees. He takes this as a way of living for him and he has

to live this life by choice. He could probably retire in future when his son is good enough to manage his business.

When he retires, he will keep himself busy as he has a lot of things to do." If he is rich, he would like to travel and to perform social work helping the poor in China or to become a teacher. He would also like to spend some time in Malaysia.

Mr. L wants to engage in community activities in America but is unable to do so due to the demands of his business. He has thought about involving himself in assisting new Chinese immigrants settle down and to help them find jobs in United States. He feels that the best way to influence societal changes would be to get involve in politics but he accedes that he has no time even to think of it.

Mr. L hopes that his son will be able to join him in his business. However, if he decides to continue his post-graduate studies, he would not object. He is leaving the choice of career, education and community involvement entirely to his son. Mr. L does not want to speculate what society will be like for his children in future.

Mr. L would like his children to emulate his attitude towards the United States--he wants them to blend into the American society, at least to a certain extent. He does not want them to be completely assimilated and completely abandon their own culture. He believes that the United States, especially California, is a multi-cultural society and as such, there is the freedom to practise one's customs, traditions, religion and generally live one' own way of life. He also firmly believes that he and his children can live a bicultural

existence. In sum, "we must be assimilated to a certain extent in order to function in this society and yet be proud of being of Chinese origin."

Reflections

In reflecting on his decision to migrate to the United States about 15 years ago, he feels that he made the right choice for several reasons. First, living in the United States has "opened my mind to a lot of things which I may not have experienced if I were to remain in Malaysia." He has been provided the opportunity to learn when travelling to other foreign countries; he has gained useful skills from his training; and the opportunity to observe observe how different societies function. He is very glad that the children have the opportunity for further education and will not have to struggle to be in the top 2.0% of the Malaysian student population in order to gain places in the college and university. Overall, the American experience has been a positive one for his family and they have collectively developed physically, socially, economically and mentally.

Summary

Mr. L is a first-generation immigrant to America. He was born into a family belonging to the lower income group but through education, he managed to move up into the middle income group during his adult life. He was employed in a private multi-national company which sponsored him to America. He worked for a few years with this company until he decided to establish his

own business. To him, education is an important means of social and economic mobility as well as a tool towards enjoying the aesthetics of life. He has witnessed some practices in Malaysia which discriminates against the Chinese women. However, he did not experience this in his family. He is against such gender discriminations. When he arrived in America, he did not encounter much cultural difficulties in adjusting to the American society. He is aware of the positive and negative aspects of both Chinese and American cultures and expects his children will be able to assimilate the best of both the cultures and to reject the negatives from both. He is aware that there are racial discriminations in America but are relatively mild compared to those in Malaysia. He does not suffer adversely from such discriminations. He takes the realistic position of not trying to resolve the problem of racial discriminations but "to live with it." He feels that his children are compliant and do not pose any generational conflict with him and his wife. He is not aware of the model minority label in America. He feels that he has made the right decision to migrate to America and has benefited more from it than the losses he experienced. He is optimistic about the bright future in America for him and his family.